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Artistic Voice:

Psychological Dimensions of Film Artistry

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Artistic Voice:

Psychological Dimensions of Film Artistry

by

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Preface

> Language interposes itself between man and reality; it is the tool for thinking and is the most elaborate realization of this intermediary sphere. In dialogue tension arises between the discursive content and the non-discursive connotation of the intended meaning.
>
> - Patrick de Maré

Artistic voice was an idealized concept when I began this research study. I believed only artists had the ability to translate creative ideas into beautiful forms. However, four years of research and personal experience (a process that continues today) taught me the value of discovering my own artistic voice.

I developed a deeper awareness of culturally sustained beliefs and thoughts shaping my perception of the world around me. Concepts of time and space, the language I used to communicate, and interpersonal dynamics took on added meaning and richer dimension. So much of our lives we take for granted, living on the surface. Yet doggedly pursuing understanding of this topic opened my world-view to the power of the intuitive, the guidance of artistic mastery, and expression of my own voice.

Artistic voice was not a new concept. A Google search for the term provided over 10,000 responses on the Internet. Art institutions advertised classes helping students develop their artistic voice. Artists discussed finding their own artistic voice. The term appeared to have a common meaning. Yet no one defined it and it was not in the dictionary.

So, what was artistic voice?

Initially, I defined it as a subjective experience—a sense of the artist's presence in the background or permeating an art form(s). The viewer, reader, or audience member

somehow experienced an intimate connection through the form, a relationship with the artist through shared experience. But, I wanted to step out of the shoes of the audience and into the shoes of the artist. How did the artist experience her own artistic voice?

I wanted to know more than the techniques of expression or style, i.e. how the artist portrayed a story that moved me emotionally, captured the brilliance of rainbow light in a painting of an iceberg, or wrote a poem that refined my insight or perception. My question was, "How does an artist capture the human experience in form?" This question contrasted artistic creation with scientific inquiry or the development of psychological theories of the mind. How did the artist "know" what he or she knew? How did the artist express that knowing so clearly and beautifully? And how could I learn that way of knowing and expressing human experience?

Thus began this project, a winding journey to discover the psychological aspects of artistic voice. (Notice my assumption that knowing was linked with the mind.) I chose to study independent film artists in Austin, Texas for several reasons. First, this project was inspired by a film history class that revealed the language and emerging underlying structure of film from the invention of Edison's kinetoscope to the development of visual and sound techniques, story arc, and variations of film genre—from machine through layers of language structure to meaning. I could learn about the human system as I studied the cultural system created by a film community. Secondly, film artists develop their expertise within their craft, i.e. cinematography or editing, so a study of those artists would include an exploration across mediums. Also, a film was a collective project requiring a negotiation of voice within a film community. Lastly, the Austin film community developed an alternative voice to the Hollywood studio structure.

The artists within this independent film community had greater freedom to explore and develop their own voice.

I used the hermeneutic interpretive process to structure my research project because it focused on meaning-making and context. Unlike other qualitative methods that focus on meaning for the individual (phenomenology, case study, or life history), hermeneutics is concerned with the interplay between individual meaning and historical context (Tesch, 1990).

My method for studying artistic voice included interviewing ten film artists. I video and audio taped two-hour semi-structured interviews. During the interview, I followed the structured questions with detailed questions, inviting artists to elaborate significant information. Each interview was a dialogical exchange. (See Appendix A for interview questions.)

After the interviews were transcribed, I initially looked for common themes and similarities/differences across interviews while developing a greater awareness of the artists' historical and present contexts. I read other media interviews about them, studied their work, and watched movies they referred to in their stories. The key to examining each interview was maintaining the integrity of meaning between the individual statements and the context of the interview as a whole as well as the larger cultural context (called the hermeneutic spiral or circle, Tesch, 1990).

In addition to the interview process, I reviewed existing research on creativity and studied artistic expression by observing my personal experiences while "doing" this creative project. Comparing and contrasting the interview results, existing scientific

research, and my subjective experience of the creative process formed the basis for my interpretations (also known as "fusion of horizon" as described by Gadamer, 1975).

I faced several challenges throughout the process including unearthing my own prejudices. Resolving each challenge forced a shift in perception and deeper understanding. Four key challenges were: (a) sustaining an open-minded state through the project in order to prepare for the discovery process, (b) articulating a scientific paradigm shift that set the foundation for this study, (c) creating an artistic project (this project) in order to better understand Dewey's (1934) concept of *aesthetic consciousness* and the ambiguous process of creating form from an inspired idea, and (d) developing an expressive language system that aesthetically conveyed the meaning of artistic voice.

Before I present those challenges and the outcomes of resolving them, I want to prepare you by reminding you that perception is created, an organized interpretation. Ernst Gombrich (1960) made this point in his book, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation.* In his book, he revealed the evolution of systems of visual language shaping artistic style. Those styles reflected individual training and different modes of seeing the world rather than accuracy in representation.

Just as Gombrich traced the development of visual systems, the field of linguistics (Reddy, 1993, and Lakoff, 1993) identified how metaphors created a perceptive system structuring the English language. I present that information before I present the challenges I faced when designing this project so you have it as a background while reading about the challenges. Then I present my initial belief systems and how they supported my own mental framework, one that limited my ability to experience artistic

voice. As I guide you through the experience of perception shifts that altered that frame, I introduce the assumptions that form a foundation for a model of artistic voice.

Metaphor as a System

First, Donald Schön (1993) described the linguistic tradition that viewed metaphors as "central to the task of accounting for our perspectives on the world: how we think about things, make sense of reality, and set the problems we later try to solve" (p. 137). In this tradition, he described two central puzzles, interpretation and generativity. Interpretation was the hermeneutic problem—"understanding the inferences by which such interpretations are made, the sorts of evidence pertinent to them, and the criteria by which they should be judged and tested" (p. 138). Generativity involved using metaphor to gain a new perspective.

According to Schön (1993), metaphors were the basis of problem-setting (the stories that people create to discuss what is troublesome and what needs fixing) leading to problem-solving strategies. However, not all metaphors were helpful because the assumptions linking them to reality were inaccurate. Changing the metaphor changed the way the problem was framed and the resulting solution. Only a generative metaphor stimulated new perceptions, explanations, and inventions leading to problem solution.

The process of developing a generative metaphor involved reorganizing elements and relationships, regrouping and renaming. The mental process of changing perspective involved building a new metaphor (meaning) or way of seeing a situation.

I first identified the metaphors that kept me from experiencing artistic voice by using the hermeneutic process to explore the metaphoric links and assumptions I held.

And then it became clear artistic voice was a generative metaphor building a bridge to a new form of perception. But until I found the prejudices existing within my scientific training, I could not expand my own perception into the new art domain. I found this process of developing historical consciousness, aesthetic consciousness, and creating a generative metaphor addressed a central problem of psychology—transformation.

George Lakoff (1993) was a second major contributor to understanding the function of metaphors. He defined metaphor from an empirical perspective (contemporary metaphor research): "a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system" (p. 203). This research built on Reddy's (1993) identification of the conduit metaphor bias within the English language. Reddy's (1993) research was important because it laid the foundation for Lakoff's work. Reddy identified what he called the conduit metaphor. It revealed a basic assumption or conceptual bias in the English language—"in speaking or writing, humans place their internal thoughts and feelings within the external signals of language (p. 168)." Those signals were words or word-phrases. An example of the conduit metaphor was "You still haven't *given me* any *idea* of what you mean" or "You have to *put* each *concept into words* very carefully" (p. 166-167).

Reddy demonstrated how language promoted the assumption that information was transferred intact from one person to the next, and how that assumption did not take into account that the interpretation of information or meaning was constructed by the reader/receiver. The result was a bias in thought processes. The bias had a serious impact—blinding people to differences in context thus creating differences in meaning (Reddy, 1993).

Lakoff (1993) recognized the significance of Reddy's work and began looking at metaphor systems throughout our language. He acknowledged Reddy's work as a pivotal study revealing that

> ordinary everyday English is largely metaphorical.… [T]he locus of metaphor is thought, not language, that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience (p. 204).

Lakoff (1993) stated that the difference between contemporary theory and Reddy's work was the discovery of the *system* of metaphors that "structures our everyday conceptual system" (p. 204). He uncovered a meaning-making system, mapping from the source domain to another domain, i.e. the LOVE AS A JOURNEY metaphor mapping the abstract concept of love to the source domain of travel. The myriad experiences involved in making a physical journey set up a system of understanding for the change processes involved in love.

As I describe the different challenges I faced in this study, I highlight the important metaphors I found operating within my own thoughts to help reveal how those metaphors impact one's perception. Meeting these four challenges—openness and discovery, undergoing a scientific paradigm shift, the art of doing, and language structure—shifted my perception and ability to experience my own artistic voice.

Openness and Discovery

The first challenge involved the discovery nature of the project. The discovery of qualities or dynamic relationships required different parameters than those of verification or replication found in quantitative research. The basic guiding principle for discovery was maintaining an open mental state rather than assuming I understood the artist's

meaning (McDaniel, Jordan & Fleeman, 2003). I had to balance that open mindset with an awareness of their cultural landscape. Before stepping into the film culture, I educated myself about the film production process and the film industry. This preparation allowed me to hear nuances of meaning during interviews and question subtle differences or ask for elaboration of new details. With each interview, my own perception was enriched.

Exploring my own artistic limitations was another form of preparation for openness during interviews. I asked the question of myself, "What assumptions currently influence my belief that I do not have artistic voice?" Or, "What factors close my mind to understanding my own artistic voice and how can I change those?" I believed my ability to appreciate qualities of artistic voice in others required me to study them within myself.

Ironically, my perception—that I lacked artistic ability—shifted when I examined my basic assumptions about my own scientific cultural landscape. I realized when I began reading scientific debates about the nature of science, art, and language that my assumptions about culture were naïve. Early steps, like looking for definitions of the words "art" and "science" and struggling to correctly understand the **scientific method** of "interpretation," were frustrating. I discounted my confusion when I could not find **definitive answers**. Those appeared to be simple questions. I wanted a **foundation of certainty**, **facts** to support my research, and I was sure it was **"out there,"** that others knew the answer. I just had to find those answers.

But slowly I discovered my answers lay within the uncertainty and my frustration was linked to my **desire for certainty**. Culture and language were not concrete reality but a constant changing flux of dynamic co-created relationships. Certainty was

dependent on context. Art and science meant different things depending on the individual's perspective in **time and space** or particular circumstance.

I found the historical foundations of science were shaped by the political, religious, and economic factors of their time. For example, prior to Galileo's revelation of the relationship between the earth and universe, religious doctrine defined the nature of the universe. Galileo's method of experimental control and objectivity was an attempt to clarify reality, challenging not only religious leaders' subjective understanding but also their status as the holders of ultimate knowledge. It put his life in danger. According to Kuhn (1962) cultural factors historically constrained the acceptance of new information, a new voice, when the information was vastly different from existing belief systems.

And yet, information that was accepted became codified as reality. Descartes' visions of reality discounted the value of the human sense nature as a basis for accurate information about the world. He developed the foundations for our modern scientific methods based on mathematics and our Western concept of the mind or "*cogito"* (Audi, 1995, p. 225). His bias toward elevating the mind over sense nature continues today, reflected in the university setting by the split between funding for science/technology and liberal arts education.

Unquestioned cultural biases were also mirrored within me. I found I trusted my mind's intellect (thoughts) as accurate interpretations of my reality and judged emotions as the pleasurable or painful result of experiencing reality. My mind synthesized past experience as a means for understanding the current moment and made behavior choice based on **predicting** best options for desired future outcomes. Automatic or habitual labeling (by the mind) of emotions as painful led to avoidance of predicted painful

experiences. Unquestioned, this domination of thought over emotions led to repeated failure to learn from the avoided experiences. Unexplored, emotional depths were categorized and one-dimensional rather than fluid and energizing.

This project taught me how blindness to culturally accepted assumptions limited my own artistic ability. I became open to exploring a different way of viewing the relationship between mind, emotions, and the body's sense nature.

Suddenly, historical consciousness was no longer a textbook idea about cultural reality. It became my lived experience. Researching historical scientific context revealed the dynamic relationships needed for deeper understanding. Now I needed a model with assumptions that reflected reality as an artist saw it.

My sense of lacking artistic ability began to shift when I understood origins of terms like "aesthetics" (Audi, 1995). I saw the beauty of John Dewey's (1934) pragmatic development of "aesthetic consciousness" and the importance of "undergoing *and* doing" in his book, *Art as Experience* (1934). The act of doing engaged sense knowing in an interactive relationship with form. Intimacy in that relationship resulted from increased knowing and appreciation, a form of communication and language development. Other authors (Gadamer, 1986; Shusterman, 2000) explored the philosophy of aesthetics, but Dewey's pragmatic philosophical descriptive style of writing reflected the part-whole dynamic relationship that he discussed.

Observing myself using Dewey's lens, I noticed I was undergoing a meaning creation process in moment-to-moment experience with this project. I had created barriers when I maintained my own internal reality in relationship to a supposedly certain world. My anxious, and sometimes paranoid participation reflected frustration with

ambiguity as I sought certainty. But when my assumptions shifted, so did my participation. I was no longer an uninvolved bystander **mechanically** reacting to cultural phenomenon based solely on past/future predictions. Openness allowed me to see in-the-moment differences to past experience and create new interpretations.

Developing an appreciation for the nature of ambiguity and the contextual quality of certainty ironically created a feeling of security, opened my awareness to the fluid "world of possibilities" (see Chapter 2, multiple solutions within nonlinear equations), and my role as a creator. I am grateful to the participants of this study for helping me transform my perception and acting as guides to this uncertain reality as I found my own voice.

I elaborate on Dewey's aesthetic consciousness model in Chapter 2. That model informed my interpretative perspective as I reviewed the interviews of film artists. Discovering and internally integrating the model was the result of resolving the next two challenges, undergoing a scientific paradigm shift and the art of doing.

Undergoing a Scientific Paradigm Shift

The second challenge came from the review of existing research on creativity and voice. Many of the conclusions drawn from those studies were based on Newtonian assumptions that natural laws create a "**mechanized universe**" (the basis for much of quantitative research). I discovered that most current creativity research reflects those assumptions. Conclusions were framed in the rhetoric of prediction—elements or conditions conducive to a creative experience were identified and labeled, i.e. the correlation between elite performance and amount of practice (Ericsson, 1996).

Measurement and analysis were the primary methods used to study creativity and predictability was the potential outcome. Yet, those studies could not explain states of mind described by artists that has been called genius (Simonton, 1999a), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), or state B thinking (Franklin, 2001). Those states could only be described or named.

In addition, anomalies—people who created great works of art, those who stepped out of the "normal" range of prediction—could only be described by their qualities (Franklin, 2001; Gardner, 1993). Statistical analysis could not predict the anomaly because it explored similarities within a defined context. Anomalous people created new contexts, ways of viewing a problem, or organized perceptions.

Thus the particular paradigm (or **universe is a machine** metaphor) used by quantitative researchers limited the perception of relational dynamics. The machine paradigm (set of rules within a given context) required the object of study be a closed system. Definition meant drawing a line around an object then delimiting what was in and out of the circle. Fortunately, a new scientific paradigm, complexity science, emerged that included assumptions about dynamic qualities and began with the assumption of the universe as an open, changing system. Relationships between objects were far more important than the individual object and the object boundaries were more fluid. Harmoniously organized objects within one context had the potential for evolving into new contexts with new rules of functioning.

In the complexity science paradigm, anomalies were a result of emergent properties related to dynamic relationships. In this research, I explore the hypothesis that artistic voice is an emergent property and the language/concepts of complexity science

create a generative metaphor between science and art domains. I provide details about complexity science in Chapter 2.

Thus the second challenge involved translating existing information between the old and new scientific paradigms, creating a bridge for new understanding of creative states. Languaging was a critical aspect of this project . Again, I looked to my artists to explore their experience of developing language through intimate communication with form.

The Art of Doing

The third challenge involved the question, is this project a sufficient test of what Dewey (1934) called *direct experience*? Dewey claimed the difference between science and art was the outcome—science sought to create abstraction (theories, hypotheses, etc.) while art sought to embody meaning through direct experience with form (doing). I **hypothesized** that this research project and subsequent report could be the form.

The question arose, "Would working in the medium of abstraction or science genuinely emulate direct experience as an artist experiences it in the act of creating or performing?" That question would not be fully answered until the project was complete. However, this project provided a context similar to that of an artistic project with emerging aspects including: committing to a project, developing the ability to tolerate ambiguity and frustration, and overcoming obstacles to completing the project. A further goal was to go beyond the realm of **objective scientific inquiry** to study qualities such as artistic trust in intuitive guidance, ideas, and inspiration.

Those qualities were critical for reaching my goal of creating a form that would stimulate an aesthetic experience for an audience rather than just adding to a knowledge base—testing my understanding of the doing phase. An aesthetic experience was an important discriminating factor for artistic voice, the subjective meaning-making of art versus objectivity in science. John Dewey's (1934) definition of art and his model for aesthetic experience will be discussed in Chapter 2. But his criteria for creating art included: (a) the person undergoing an aesthetic experience involving a goal and overcoming barriers to that goal, (b) embodying the meaning of that experience in form, and (c) the audience experiencing that meaning aesthetically or directly, having their own aesthetic experience.

As you read this study, you will or will not have a direct experience of resonance or connecting with the material, a quality I explored while conducting this research. Peter Elbow (1994) and other literary scholars defined resonance as "an author's presence…it points to the relationship between discourse and the unconscious" (p. 17). Resonance shaped my understanding of artistic voice as I underwent an aesthetic experience, and was the quality I sought as I faced the final challenge of the doing phase—languaging my understanding of the results of this research.

However, resonance cannot be passed from artist to audience just as thoughts and ideas cannot be given to others (see discussion of conduit metaphor above). A pianist reading a musical score for the first time may resonate with the composer's experience because he understands musical systems. An audience member without musical training would have a different experience; reading the score might appear meaningless but hearing the pianist's interpretation directly would feel inspired or emotional resonance.

The pianist, when reading the score, could create the interpretation within his imagination while the audience member could not unless associations were made between sound and music's symbolism.

Thus I recognized the importance of creating similar associations between your experience and a familiar meaning system. Otherwise, you would not recognize artistic voice evolving within your own experience.

Language Structure

The challenge of languaging was similar to that faced in describing a scientific paradigm shift. Underlying assumptions shaped subsequent structures. Our written and spoken language holds assumptions limiting our ability to perceive direct experience (see discussion of metaphors above). According to Dewey (1934), "Thinking directly in terms of colors, tones, images, is a different operation technically from thinking in words. …If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist" (p. 73-74).

The degree of intimacy with experience and expression formed Dewey's (1934) distinction between science and art.

> But [the artist's] thought is more immediately embodied in the object. Because of the comparative remoteness of his end, the scientific worker operates with symbols, words and mathematical signs. The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it (pp. 15-16).

Could I produce an aesthetic project with symbolic language? The above statement seemed to imply I could not. Was it possible to express my experience of artistic voice through an abstract form? And, weren't all forms abstractions? The distinction that

seemed important to Dewey was not necessarily the actual form but the inclusion of sense perception and emotion as organizers of the interpretation and expression. The intimacy with the *object that he is producing* required a deep connection, love and passion, or merging with form, transcending physical boundaries. Love in this sense implied feeling and joining with another (person, idea, or form), noticing subtle nuances and rhythms.

Dewey (1934) described aesthetic rhythms in art using similar terms as those used in complexity science.

> Esthetic recurrence [or rhythm] is that of *relationships* that sum up and carry forward. Recurring units as such call attention to themselves as isolated parts, and thus away from the whole. Hence they lessen esthetic effect. Recurring *relationships* serve to define and delimit parts, giving them individuality of their own. But they also connect; the individual entities they mark off demand, *because* of the relations, association and interaction with other individuals. Thus the parts vitally serve in the construction of an expanded whole (p. 166).

Dewey wrote about the contrasting goals of science and art during a time when the mechanistic universe paradigm embraced reductionistic techniques and explanations. Complexity science concepts were just beginning to emerge in quantum mechanics and relativity theory. But it was Prigogine's (Nicolis & Prigogine,1989) work on complexity in thermodynamics that opened the door to understanding relationships within a context and emergence of new contexts.

So, with this new scientific paradigm, I believed it was possible to test the ideas of Dewey using a scientific project to develop awareness of aesthetic consciousness. However, I also needed to discriminate any similarities and differences between scientific experience and the direct experience Dewey described in art. Was there a corollary of direct experience using the English language as form?

The qualities of touch, smell, taste, sight, and sound are aspects of energy—degrees of intensity and combinations of chemicals and wavelengths—touching receptors connecting to interpretive centers in the body (direct experience). But the idea or inspiration exists before form in both science and art. Languaging or embodying the idea in form involves a structure or interpretive system. That interpretive system must be a shared system within a community. If an artist creates a system too different from known symbols the audience will not be able to interpret the meaning of the message. An analogy from film might help describe what I mean.

Thomas Edison introduced film in the 1880s. One of the early short documentaries was "Arrivee d'un train en gare a La Ciotat" by Louis and Auguste Lumiere (1895). Audience members did not have an experience with two-dimensional movement of an object (moving pictures) so they could not discriminate between a movie of a rolling train from a real train. As they sat watching a life-sized train barreling toward them on the screen, they ran screaming from their seats. Once they discriminated the similarities and differences of a train on a track from a train on a movie screen, they could generalize the concept to other moving pictures.

The system of film language evolved as audiences' understanding of connections to real life evolved. Early film language was visual—exaggerated facial expressions, creative set designs, and editing for pace and meaning. Over 30 years later sound was added (Dirks, 1996-2006). Yet early audience members learned the unspoken communication because they had a common understanding of expressions, emotions, and related human experiences.

Artistic voice reminded me of the early train movie. Until I experienced it and investigated the qualities of it, I could not build a mental concept of it. I only knew it intuitively or as a felt knowing (an *impulsion* as Dewey described, see Chapter 2). But for the idea to become useful, I had to develop a means of communicating it, an organized system of links to existing understanding. The history of film provided a model for how film artists created language.

Early movie-makers first developed the idea of projecting simple images on a screen. Later ideas emerged, like adding a story line with images and then sound and color. Layers of language enhanced meaning and brought stories and characters to life just as I wanted to bring artistic voice to life.

I started with the "knowing" or inspiration of artistic voice (I found Dewey's term, *impulsion*, much later). While writing my final paper for the film history class, I was stuck on the problem of understanding how psychology and film used their study of human nature in different ways. I was struck by how well film seemed to understand human nature. In contrast, working in the mental health profession, I was discouraged when I observed severe mental illness that seemed beyond the help of psychology or medical science.

I could not resolve the differences in approach and found myself with writer's block and a fast approaching deadline. I decided to take a nap asking the creative muse for help (a strategy I'd used successfully once before). At the stage between waking and sleep, the words "artistic voice" came to mind along with a felt sense of knowing its meaning. I understood it represented the solution to my writer's block and was exactly the sort of topic I could passionately embrace for my dissertation.

Inspiration was exciting and led to serendipitous experiences slowly building this project. I describe those experiences in Chapters 4 and 5. I underwent an experience of transforming a perception that I did not have artistic voice to developing an expanded awareness of aesthetic consciousness as a normal human experience, just as Dewey claimed.

Expressing what I experienced in language was another matter. I first needed to become intimate with the form. I found I could not define artistic voice using the dictionary terms for artist and voice. Again, discovering historical underpinnings of the English language system helped clarify my confusion. Alfred Korzybski's (1933) work revealed how Aristotelian semantics shaped our language and psychology. Identity between words and objects created distortions. Korzybski's statement, "The word is not the object spoken about" (p. 10), clarified for me Dewey's direct experience idea. Dictionary terms were not the *experience* of artistic voice, a process not an object.

In addition, Korzybski found that English words and statements did not convey time and space context or "time-binding" (p. 8). Science in Dewey's 1934 experience was not the same science as my 2006 experience. That historical context was essential for my accurate interpretation of Dewey's discussion of differences between art and science.

Korzybski discussed a non-aristotelian language system with the inclusion of "knowing" as essential to expression. Unfortunately, Korzybski's solution for a more accurate language structure was too different from our current structure for the information to achieve mainstream acceptance. I explore his general semantics in

Chapter 2 and suggest the contemporary theory of metaphor (Lakoff, 1993) has potential for creating a language structure for communicating direct experience.

In addition, the idea of developing artistic voice as a generative metaphor solved the problem of connecting understanding human experience across art and science domains. The artist interviews became the source of descriptions about their experience of artistic voice. My task became identifying dynamic links between experience and expression of artistic voice, not analyzing and reducing the material into categories and objects. Making sense of the ambiguity creating the four challenges above clarified my direction for the remainder of this study. The task of weaving the threads together into a coherent story or framework was the next step.

nurtured me while I struggled with the many decisions and celebrated my achievements along the way. Throughout my time in the counseling psychology program there were professors, supervisors, and colleagues who were also supportive and encouraging. I want to thank all of them for their involvement with me during the process.

I feel I must tip my hat to the serendipitous people I met. I was introduced to Bernard Rapoport through a chance connection in a writing class. He told me about John Dewey's work and modeled the power of truly being present with others. Reuben McDaniel set up the complexity science symposium at UT on the anniversary of Ilya Prigogine's death. He introduced me to Fritjof Capra's writings and reminded me about the power of networking as an emergent property. Those were just two of the many critical, surprising events that shaped the course of this project.

Most of all, I want to thank the artists that participated in this study. They generously gave of their time and opened their lives to my questions. And, they were interested in the idea of artistic voice. Their enthusiasm, along with the enthusiasm of everyone that I described the project to, reminded me this project was meaningful.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my cats, Sheba and Trixie. Their companionship through the long days and nights reminded me when it was time to eat and sleep. And when to purr.

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Historical discourses created an artificial separation between artistic and scientific ways of knowing. This hermeneutic interpretive study explored the experiential wisdom of ten film artists and the development of artistic voice, the integration of artistic and scientific ways of knowing. Artistic voice was defined from a metaphoric framework. In addition, a theoretical model of artistic voice was created reflecting basic assumptions within complexity science and metaphoric structures found in our language system. The study examined the emergent process—the dynamic relationship between the desire to create, personal wisdom gained through life experience and the act of creating, along with expertise in the language system of the artist's craft. Ability to engage in in-the-moment expression reflected a state of aesthetic consciousness.

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Creating a Vision

Chapter 1

> Indeed, the true miracle of the language of art is not that it enables the artist to create the illusion of reality. It is that under the hands of a great master the image becomes translucent. In teaching us to see the visible world afresh, he gives us the illusion of looking into the invisible realms of the mind—if only we know as Philostratus says, how to use our eyes.
>
> - E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*

The moment artistic voice was conceived, I knew it was an inspired thought. Creating a form that reflected the beauty of the idea, illuminating it for others, was a new experience. I needed a medium, a basic structure or skeleton, muscles and tendons that supported movement, and skin setting a permeable boundary. Just like the human body, the medium needed to grow and emerge into a cohesive unit that captured the spirit of that moment of conception and moved the imagination of my audience. This chapter set the vision for the project, the process of letting go of old perceptions in order to explore new ones.

My task was twofold. First, I wanted to bring this research project to life for my audience by creating an experiential context. I included my own process, exploring aesthetic consciousness as I wrote this chapter, to convey one such experience. It was an example of creating form, much like a painting or a story—selecting and structuring details to shape verbal images while voicing the struggle, frustration, and resolution inherent in that process.

Secondly, I needed to weave together the volume of existing research and the experiences of film artists into a dialogue about artistic voice. What discoveries had film artists made about their own voice? How did they make sense of their journey? What human commonalities did their stories reveal? And how did research expand our

understanding of those commonalities? What kind of structure would support that dialogue? Creating a beautiful design, one that captured the rich dimensions of human experience, was my goal.

A story began to emerge as I integrated my voice, the voices of other researchers, and participants' voices. In film, the mythological hero's journey of transformation (Propp, 1984) has been the archetype for many storylines. I found a similar thread weaving together these diverse elements—the interaction between external events and internal human limitation driving the search for triumph over adversity. Just like the hero, I learned I had to rely on my own intuitive guidance and scholarly training while writing the story of artistic voice. The voices of the participants were always present as I wrote and re-wrote, reminding me of their own journey. The cultural scientific landscape set the stage for the journey, the obstacles, the discoveries, and the way back home. The first task—defining artistic voice—proved to be the hardest and also held the key to unlocking my understanding of aesthetic consciousness.

The Journey Begins

I began exploring the unknown territory of dissertation research by starting with the known—existing dialogues in creativity research. I reviewed the background of facts, beliefs, and assumptions on creativity, philosophy of aesthetics, and much more expecting to find a map for the journey. I was soon overwhelmed. No one talked about artistic voice specifically, only models of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Martindale, 1990), case studies of artists (Gardner, 1993), or behavioral or mental correlations of genius and creativity (Eysenck, 1995; Simonton, 1999b)—various parts with no

consistent combination of elements across the population of artists. (Notice my early mindset or perception based on pre-complexity science understanding.)

Defining this concept felt as though I was synthesizing details and creating a body called artistic voice, stitching together an arm from one form of knowledge, such as philosophy or psychology, and a leg from another field of study, such as art history. The parts worked together, but it was clumsy and distorted, clearly not attractive nor inspiring.

But, surprisingly, looking at those facts helped me see an unconscious scientific system functioning beneath the knowledge structure. I used unconscious to mean unexamined core assumptions that new information was built upon. I came to see knowledge as a lens scientists built to explore reality. The measurement tools creating knowledge, like statistical analysis, were simply devices used to select various aspects of reality. Microscopes revealed blood cells but the story of how blood cells functioned was knowledge. Another example demonstrated how knowledge could be used to further a political agenda. Statistical methods led to the discovery of the bell curve identifying "normal range" in the size of peas. This method became widely used in all manner of human sciences where interpretations were influenced by personal beliefs. One such study, by Herrnstein and Murray published in the book, *The Bell Curve*, looked at intelligence across ethnic dimensions. According to Gardner (1999), their interpretation distorted reality, implying that ethnicity alone correlated with intelligence, rather than furthering our understanding of social conditions influencing intelligence.

Kuhn (1962) elaborated the historical rise and fall of scientific paradigms and emphasized science's deep influence on foundational assumptions of our culture. One

example, the universe as machine paradigm gave way to new discoveries like quantum mechanics and relativity theory in physics or systems theory in biology. But those old underlying beliefs lived on in our language systems and cultural perception.

I lost my faith in scientific knowledge during this early stage. However, I found a community of researchers working to expose the faulty structure—separation within and among objects—and re-establish sciences based on assumptions of unity and connection. John Dewey's (1934) aesthetic theory detailed the human aesthetic experience as an outgrowth of Nature's processes. In his work, I found my answer to the question, what was the difference between the scientific and artistic development of understanding? According to Dewey, the scientific paradigm sought to create linguistic concepts or theories from their ideas. Artistry, in contrast, sought to create a direct sensate experience for an audience, transcending the limitations of verbal language and knowledge. Artists experientially explored consequences of selection—lines, colors, movement, pacing—creating a base of practical wisdom that included the body's intelligence as well as the mind (Dewey, 1934).

Another researcher, Fritjof Capra (1996), chronicled historical understanding of substance and form relationships in the scientific community. Science began with the search for the essence of substance. Then the ancient philosophy of Pythagoras separated form and substance, defining them as separate and created a mathematics to study patterns or form. This split and other later discoveries influenced a cultural perception of separation in the world. Objects like chemical compounds were identified as separate from their interactions in substances. The assumptions about substance and form fueled scientific paradigms looking at the physical world and in turn influenced the

interpretation of human experience. Mind became separate from body in Descartes' Cartesian model—dictating the direction of scientific research that continues even today (Audi, 1995).

Capra's (1996) detailed description of the new complexity science research demonstrated the fallacy of separation and revealed deeply interconnected networks in the physical world. His historical account of scientific discoveries supported Dewey's assertions. Humanity was not separate from nature. The web of systemic networks found in nature was inherent at all levels of form, including human form. Aesthetic consciousness—the unique quality Dewey believed distinguished human experience from the rest of nature—was itself a system arising from and engaged with other environmental systems.

The foundational level of aesthetic consciousness was nature in the form of energy—directly experienced through sensing. Direct experience was filtered by human awareness creating meaning-making structures, i.e. words, ideas, paintings, or music. Alfred Korzybski (1933), another researcher writing during Dewey's time, discovered how linguistic structures involved a selection process creating layers of abstraction. He described fallacies of our current system based on Aristotelian and Newtonian rules of selection and proposed a different system more accurately reflecting direct experience. George Lakoff's (1993) research on metaphors identified those rich layers of symbolic language generating and connecting concepts shaping our cultural perception. Those layers remained largely unconscious yet influenced our everyday communication and interactions, our understanding of the world.

This community of researchers provided the background assumptions for a new language or perceptive lens I used to see and articulate the dynamic qualities of artistic voice. And as I read their work about the rise and fall of scientific paradigms, I could sense a rhythmic pulse, like the swell and crash of ocean waves on a beach, shaping the shoreline of human awareness across time.

Before I provide the language articulated by these researchers in Chapter 2, I thought it important to give you an example of my own shift in perception. The shift from a paradigm of separation to one of interconnection followed an intuitive selection process. The result was a generative metaphor I used to articulate the systemic structure of artistic voice. My process was driven by the idea of resonance, physical qualities of rhythm and movement attracting supportive vibrations of thought (Dewey, 1934). Similar associations resonated together helping me formulate a gestalt experience out of ambiguous connections, clarifying a quality called emergence for artistic voice.

The Driving Need

I wanted this project, the final composition, to be fluid and cohesive. Organization was key. Again, I started by looking for what was known, a model of the generative metaphor. I knew the limitations of the reductionistic scientific model based on part-to-whole relationships in a closed system (Capra, 1996). Closed systems did not take in new energy for growth or learning. They explained rather than explored. They were complete within themselves. In contrast, a generative metaphor model (Schön, 1993) was an open system.

> It is nothing less than the question of how we come to see things in new ways. Conceiving of generative metaphor as a special case—a special version of seeing-

> as by which we gain new perspectives on the world—we ask how the process of generative metaphor works….
>
> In short, we can spell out the metaphor, elaborate the assumptions which flow from it, and examine their appropriateness in the present situation (p. 138).

A generative metaphor seemed to transcend one limitation of the scientific method—ignoring current context. And metaphors connected two domains, such as 'a flight of ideas' linking the conceptual and physical domains, extending understanding of the familiar to the abstract. I first looked for structural properties to create a metaphor amidst the background research but then remembered a quote from one of my study participants, screenwriter Bill Wittliff. He discussed the purpose of art as a reminder of meaning:

> I don't think writers, creative people, art, tell anybody anything. I think good writing sets up the pose, just the right distance, like poetry. Poetry is never in the lines, it's in the gaps between lines. And that's what all great art does. It sets a pose just right so that anybody from any culture, whatever place in the world, can make the jump. And that's the reminder. If you set them too far apart, they can't make the jump. Too close, and it's not interesting. Just right, so people make the jump. All it's doing is reminding them of something they already knew but didn't know then. And that's why art, writing, music, etc., can be universal, because it's all tapping on the same cylinders.

Transcribing this statement, his words reminded me of the difference between the conduit metaphor and a generative metaphor. The objective was not creating a knowledge base with explanations and analyses of artistic voice educating the reader. My goal was generating a form that invited reader participation, reminded them of something they already understood or resonated with, and shaped a new problem-setting perspective. A generative metaphor, like poetry, helped readers make the jump.

Overcoming Obstacles

Remember, problem-setting was the creation of stories that discussed what was troublesome and what needed fixing (Schön, 1993). And the central problem of psychology was transformation, identifying individuals' stories that kept them stuck in painful emotions and experiences, helping them transform meaning-making structures, and learning to live life more fully. I believed studying the artist's understanding of the transformational process—from lived experience to idea to language to expressive form—would provide a more comprehensive metaphor for psychology.

As I continued down the free-floating word association path of identifying an organizing theme, I became curious about resonance, the quality that drew an audience's interest in a work of art. I remembered an abstract picture drawn by a young artist involved in a psychological study of creativity (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). I relived the excitement I felt when I first saw it.

The researchers asked students at a leading art institute the question, "Who would become an artist?" The students were given a group of unrelated objects and asked to create a drawing. The drawings were evaluated by two groups, experts in the art field and lay people. Surprisingly the student with the highest evaluation by experts, Student 01, after seven years of an unsuccessful career, gave up on art because he was not able to find acceptance, people willing to buy his work. However, the student with highest markings by lay people, Student 05, was found to have a successful art career seven years later.

Comparing the two drawings, I agreed with the result by lay evaluators. I was immediately attracted to Student 05's drawing. His work appeared to move and change

shape each time I looked at it. It was interesting and engaged my perception in a conversation, marveling at how the parts flowed together, curious about the meaning of it, and wondering what linked his original choice of diverse objects to that final form.

My mind played with possible interpretations of the drawing, but finally determined this was a unique creation stimulating new associations with dimension, light contrasts, and shapes each time I looked at it. I enjoyed looking at the individual elements as well as the complete perspective. I noticed my perception moving back and forth between the parts and whole, sometimes studying a part, sometimes relating that part to other parts, playing with possible meanings. But it was the whole that drew me in and stimulated my desire to get to know the piece intimately. The first time I saw it, it seemed alive. It created the illusion of moving objects in space. Could I create such a work of art, one with energy and movement?

I played with the idea of gaps, distance, and form, making the link between the artist's drawing and the generative metaphor: "the cognitive work involves the participants in attending to new features and relations of the phenomena, and in renaming, regrouping, and reordering those features and relations" (Schön, 1993, p. 157). How could I reorder my understanding of scientific structure and communicate the qualities of artistic voice through metaphor?

Then a thought clarified my dilemma. My existing metaphoric system was locking me in to old metaphors. Once again, historical consciousness helped me see the *problem* of psychology as understanding the "mind" and "transformation." Words or concepts were culturally based ideas and my understanding of them based on accepted assumptions. If I saw the mind just as a fixed unit with historically created neural

associations, beliefs, and schemas, such as a house with rooms having different functions and spaces, then transformation meant remodeling, redecorating, or expanding existing space—the process of mechanically changing one structure into another.

My belief in the linear process was stifling my attempts to write about existing creativity research. It was too simple. Analyses built on reductionistic frameworks with defined categories, replication, and predictive ability could not be remodeled into research with a dynamic structure. The dynamic structure needed an entirely new set of rules based on uncertainty and contextual relationships rather than fixed objects. Change and feedback were an integral aspect of each moment leading to a transformative event.

Resolution of Need

A different metaphor, the mind as a forest, suddenly came to my awareness—a *dynamic* organizing framework. An individual tree was a system connected to a larger ecosystem through processes of photosynthesis, plant respiration, and root uptake of essential minerals (www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks3bitesize/science/biology/plantpro2_intro). And the forest was a system of trees competing for light and water while cooperating with other species, supplying life giving nutrients and shelter. Transformation was the normal moment-to-moment life cycle for the plants and animals within the environment. Seeds grew into trees and other plants. Birth, growth, expansion, contraction, death, and rebirth were normal phases of development within different plant or animal cycles of the forest. Evolution created new forms influenced by changing conditions like heat or moisture levels. Multiple dimensions existed in the forest. It was the environment for other living organisms as well as a system transforming itself and the planetary system.

If mind was forest, it was more than the physical brain. MIND AS FOREST metaphor resolved the Cartesian mind/body split and included the whole body learning/expressive system. And artistic voice was a type of forest, a rain forest teeming with life. A rain forest and a pine forest found in the Rocky Mountains shared the aspect of being an environmental system, just as all human beings were members of cultural social systems. The difference between the ecosystems is the generating power—the capacity for converting carbon dioxide to oxygen is far greater in a rain forest than pine forests. It has been estimated that 20% of the world's oxygen is produced by the Amazon rain forest (www.rain-tree.com/facts.htm). The rate of transformation and evolution is more rapid than in other types of forests. More than half of the world's 10 million species of plants, animals, and insects live in the tropical rain forests (www.rain-tree.com/facts.htm).

Those same qualities of dynamic systemic process and power of connection reflected artistic voice at the level of the individual or the human community. Artistic voice was not a fixed object just as a tree or a forest was not a fixed object. If I imagined the root system interacting with the photosynthetic system, I could *see* the tree as a dynamic living process. The label, tree, was just a level of abstraction, not the object (see Korzybski's, 1933 discussion of identity in Chapter 2). Artistic voice was also an abstract concept describing a human context—***a balanced aesthetic conscious learning state merging with in-the-moment expression*** (Dewey, 1934). That heightened awareness emerged and receded depending on the quality of engagement with the environment. Just as the forest was never static, the human experience was also active and in process.

How did I come to understand this artistic voice as rain forest metaphor? First, I immersed myself in the research literature, reading conclusions inside and outside of mainstream science, locating origins of ideas and following the trails of their evolution—the hermeneutic process. My limited understanding bred periods of frustration, which led me to use techniques to re-build emotional openness, to step out of the mental frame creating the frustration. Then, as I remained curious and systematically searched across a variety of domains triggered by chance conversations, I experienced an intuitive resonance between others' ideas and my own. I followed up on their resource recommendations. At some point I began to notice similarities and connections. Applying those same steps while writing this section—acting on what I knew, noticing obstacles and frustration, reducing emotional barriers to openness, remaining mentally curious, and following the trail of resonance—an image of rain forest suddenly emerged capturing the gestalt of dynamic relationships, a generative metaphor.

It conveyed the nature-based quality of systems and emergence. But could the rain forest metaphor also extend to the unique human quality of aesthetic expression? Did the links support the connections for a new perception? I reviewed John Dewey's ideas. His book, *Art as Experience*, was one of the first serendipitous resources I found early in the project. He said nature was always expressing its artistry—the organic "interplay of natural energies" (Dewey, 1934, p. 23). What was different about the human experience if we were also part of nature? According to Dewey,

> [t]he existence of art…is proof that man uses the material and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life, and that he does so in accord with the structure of his organism—brain, sense organs, and muscular system. Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. The intervention of consciousness adds regulation, power of selection,

> and redisposition. Thus it varies the arts in ways without end. But its intervention also leads in time to the *idea* of art as a conscious idea—the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity (p. 26).

This project was about experientially understanding artistic expression through conscious regulation of meaning-filled action; an emergent, natural human ability. In addition it appeared that Dewey held a deeper meaning for the *idea of art*. I hoped to clarify that question by the end of the project.

The task of defining artistic voice led to a metaphoric image created out of an emergent gestalt experience. The ideas of human nature re-integrated with other aspects of nature, the creation of meaning arising from that unity, and the expression of meaning formed out of resonant patterns was the basic structure. The rain forest image was a bridge I felt would support shared understanding. Historically science looked to the physical world to better understand our human world. Often scientists create new lenses to see unknown realms. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the structure of an open system, the basic lines and dimensions, just as an artist would paint the background of a picture. In the later chapters, I rely on the interview of other artists to reveal the spirit of artistic voice.

Creating a Conversation

Chapter 2

> Today, the world we see outside and the world we see within are converging. This convergence of two worlds is perhaps one of the important cultural events of our age.
>
> - Ilya Prigogine

> A human being is a part of the whole called by us "the universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening the circle of understanding and compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.
>
> - Albert Einstein

The key to emergent properties forming artistic voice is integration of harmonized elements, for an individual as well as for this report. The parts, in rhythm, create a new whole. Once created, the whole can not be broken down into parts without disrupting the meaning of the whole. I found that principle kept surfacing in hermeneutic philosophy, complexity science, and aesthetic theory.

The parts can be examined along with the interconnections but the context of the whole establishes the meaning. For example, I once asked a gallery owner how he decided the arrangement of an artist's pictures. He said he laid the pictures on the floor and noticed which ones seemed to talk to each other. Then he grouped them together to have a conversation. I noticed the visual conversation enhanced aspects of the paintings I might not have otherwise seen. The pictures could be broken apart again or rearranged another way, but the conversation would be lost. Following are conversations about conversations—how we can use language to discuss languaging.

My objective for this section is twofold. First, I need to lay an ontological and empirical foundation for artistic voice. If the assumptions of a reductionistic science are insufficient for understanding artistic voice, what assumptions are available? Secondly, I want to create conversations about the dimensions of aesthetic consciousness, artistry, and voice. I want to tease out the common versus unique qualities of artistic voice and identify the most current information about those qualities. What does John Dewey (1934) mean by qualities of sense and values of mind? What are Peter Elbow's (1994) ideas about resonant voice?

Dewey (1934) reminded me that my selections and interpretations of the authors' works in this section were based on similarities and differences *I felt* were important. The following quote from his book, *Art as Experience*, captures the selection process the other authors also reinforced for me,

> For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place. In both, there is a comprehension in its literal signification—that is a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His "appreciation" will be a mixture of scraps of learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration and with a confused, even if genuine, emotional excitation. (p. 56)

The first time I read Dewey's writing, I had difficulty comprehending the depth of his words. This project taught me the power of selection. I had to let go of written sections I

loved but knew did not convey the essence as succinctly as other passages. I let other aspects evolve and was surprised by the outcomes. A refining process, a reorganization, and an intuitive puzzle evolved into a coherent discussion. My appreciation and understanding of his work grew.

Here I began the process of selection, creating four conversations: (1) the new scientific basis for human systems, (2) literary and feminist psychology research on voice, (3) John Dewey's model for aesthetic consciousness, and (4) implications of those conversations for understanding artistic voice. For the first conversation, I presented the ideas of selected scientific sources, researchers who had discovered the fundamental errors in reductionistic and objectivist paradigms and their alternative assumptions. I summarized their information about complexity science and linguistic concepts. Those summaries may seem long and laborious, but necessary for understanding the concepts of complexity science and the qualities of emergence that contradict Cartesian metaphysics and Newtonian mechanism, the dominant science.

Thus, I present the historical development leading to the new science while defining its characteristics of life or complex adaptive systems (CAS). A critical aspect of CAS is feedback loops, precursors to human language. Clear communication and learning in all forms is essential for system evolution. The second and third sections of the first conversation concern the noise or miscommunication in the English language and important advances in the relationship between language systems and perception. Each of the authors proposes changes to existing language structures or new concepts to adjust perception, to make unconscious systemic qualities visible. Those

recommendations were used throughout this document to portray more accurately the meaning of my own experience with artistic voice.

The second conversation explores the meaning and development of voice in feminist psychology and literary research. The third one attempts to present the heart of John Dewey's (1934) aesthetic philosophy. The final conversation tied the other discussions into a common lens called artistic voice. I call it a lens because, like the microscope or telescope, it is purely a device for seeing more clearly the details of what is already present. However, more like a camera lens, I wanted to convey the beauty of lives lived with artistic voice.

At the end of the first three conversations, I include a self-reflective dialogue. I observe how I selected information and language each section, exploring the development of my own artistic voice through my writing.

Remembering the Rain Forest

Growth and expansion require the transmission of accurate information. Each day as we enter into our world, our bodies check the temperature as we walk out the door and adjusts our internal systems to accommodate the change. Hundreds of similar responses take place moment-to-moment, mostly unnoticed. Unfortunately, a malfunction is usually the first signal we pay attention to. Then begins the quest for understanding and meaning of the malfunction. Our current medical system, based on sciences originating from Cartesion and Newtonian mechanics, would look to the symptoms or parts to determine the problem with the whole. But if there were a different system, possibly based on assumptions of living systems, would doctors see differently? Rather than

removing an offending tumor, would they see an inefficient system pattern and the tumor as part of the adjustment the system made in order to survive? Would the doctors make different decisions about treatment based on understanding the interconnected nature of communication and learning systems within the body?

I leave you with that question and before beginning this first conversation about a different paradigm, I want to clarify the nature of a general dialogue. According to Gadamer (1975), "The deciding of the question is the way to knowledge" (p. 328). So, I went back to my initial question, what was artistic voice? The search for meaning of that concept led to greater awareness of patterns within the scientific community, the English language, and communication in general; networks of knowledge. I next needed to select threads from those dialogues and create my own associations, an interconnected structure of information by researchers who helped me see the relationship between physical systems, language systems, and individual perception.

Thus I set out to build a conversation exploring the research of Fritjof Capra (1996), Alfred Korzybski (1933), and George Lakoff (1993). Capra, a physicist, studied the historical evolution of complexity science and its application for redefining how we see our relationship with nature. He synthesized the research across scientific domains—mathematics, physical sciences, biology, and psychology—to create a unified theory of ecosystems. Korzybski discovered limitations within the structure of the English language distorting perception and communication, thus creating inaccurate feedback or evaluation. Lakoff identified the major role metaphors played in creating meaning and thus perception within our language system. I considered their work as supporting my

claim that artistic voice is an emergent quality of the human experience—clear seeing and expressing.

Once these works were selected, the next step was laying the foundation for the conversation. Gadamer (1975) described the making of a verbal conversation:

> To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed. It requires that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. For we have seen that to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. A person who possesses the 'art' of questioning is a person who is able to prevent the suppression of questions by the dominant opinion. (p. 330)

I uncovered similarities between the authors' works when I questioned the meaning of each their discoveries. I also learned that my scientific prejudices were based on limited information, such as my bias against quantitative research. Greater knowledge of the context and development of quantitative methods taught me how measurement could be a useful tool when applied with understanding of its limitations. And how it had been misused. The value of this learning prepared me to offer the concept of artistic voice and its limitations—identifying my selection of assumptions based on existing research—considering how the information could be useful but also how it held the potential for misuse.

As I re-examined my opinions against measurement and quantification, I again discovered the wisdom of Gadamer's (1975) words:

> Dialectic as the art of conducting a conversation is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect …i.e. it is the art of the formation of concepts as the working out of the common meaning. Precisely this is what characterizes a dialogue, in contrast with the rigid form of the statement that demands to be set down in writing: that here language, in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point,

> performs that communication of meaning which, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics. (p. 331)

So the question, what was artistic voice, stimulated the artistic voice as rain forest vision. The rain forest demonstrated the complex systemic structure of all nature and thus, human voice. Emergent properties were necessary for survival and the coordinated rhythms in nature reflected the beauty of balance. In an effort to bring together the voices of quantitative and qualitative science to help explore this concept of systems and communication, I began this first conversation with a summary of Capra's description of complexity science and the interconnection of all life.

Fritjof Capra

Fritjof Capra's (1996) book, *The Web of Life*, outlined the historical development of complexity science and its application to the study all living systems. I first discovered complexity science when, by chance, I picked up a book, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* by M. Mitchell Waldrop. Later, when I entered graduate school, I learned that Ilya Prigogine, a founding scientist of complexity concepts, was a resident professor at the time I was doing my research. Unfortunately, I did not learn of his role in the development of the new mathematics of thermodynamics and complex systems until after his death. But his work at the university stimulated interdisciplinary cells of researchers applying complexity theory. I met one of those researchers, Dr. R. McDaniel, at a seminar held to commemorate the anniversary of Prigogine's death and from him learned of Capra's work.

The new science included the idea of life existing in a range between order and chaos and emergent properties arising during phase transitions—movement from one

form of organization to another. Capra (1996) described how Prigogine's discovery of dissipative structures turned scientific ideas of equilibrium upside down. He discussed the concept of self-organization within systems "far from equilibrium" (p. 86)—meaning structures at the edge of chaos. The term chaos meant complex order, not randomness or disorganization. I quote Capra's summary of Prigogine's work and the many other researchers whose theories contributed to the science of CAS below. This passage elaborates how emergence to new states arises in systems:

> During the 1960s Prigogine developed a new nonlinear thermodynamics to describe the self-organization phenomenon in open systems far from equilibrium. "Classical thermodynamics," he explains, "leads to the concept of 'equilibrium structures' such as crystals. Bénard cells are structures too, but of a quite different nature. That is why we have introduced the notion of 'dissipative structures,' to emphasize the close association, at first paradoxical, in such situations between structure and order on the one side, and dissipation . . . on the other" [Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, p. 143]. In classical thermodynamics the dissipation of energy in heat transfer, friction, and the like was always associated with waste. Prigogine's concept of a dissipative structure introduced a radical change in this view by showing that in open systems dissipation becomes a source of order.…
>
> According to Prigogine's theory, dissipative structures not only maintain themselves in a stable state far from equilibrium, but may even evolve. When the flow of energy and matter through them increases, they may go through new instabilities and transform themselves into new structures of increased complexity.
>
> Prigogine's detailed analysis of this striking phenomenon showed that while dissipative structures receive their energy from outside, the instabilities and jumps to new forms of organization are the result of fluctuations amplified by positive feedback loops. Thus amplifying "runaway" feedback, which had always been regarded as destructive in cybernetics, appears as a source of new order and complexity in the theory of dissipative structures. (p. 88-89)

This passage describes two key characteristics of CAS—self-organization and emergence. The discovery of non-equilibrium structures, nonlinear patterns, and self-organizing processes were the basic assumptions for later scientific research in the fields

of biology and cognitive science extending Prigogine's work and serving as the common basis for the study of all living systems.

Nature of non-equilibrium structures and nonlinear patterns

I wanted to build a foundation for my own research based on the new paradigm of complexity. Capra (1996) distilled scientific research and described the historical role of the concepts of structure, pattern, and process in shaping scientific paradigms. The assumptions that have shaped scientific paradigms over the centuries began with their understanding of pattern and structure. The concept of process was a more recent development. His synthesis provided the basis for his own ecological framework unifying complexity research across scientific disciplines. His assumptions about structure, pattern, and process that I related to artistic voice were drawn from Prigogine's theory of dissipative structures, and Maturana and Varela's (1980) ontological theory of autopoiesis (self-making) and Santiago theory (cognition). I found it important to understand the similarities and differences between reductionistic and complexity paradigms in order to study artistic voice from a complexity perspective.

The first step was creating a visual image that contrasted the mechanistic perspective of life and the new systems perspective. Prigogine's (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984) vision of living systems included the coexistence of stability and change.

> Each great period of science has led to some model of nature. For classical science it was the clock; for nineteenth-century science, the period of the Industrial Revolution, it was an engine running down. What will be the symbol for us? What we have in mind may perhaps be expressed by a reference to sculpture, from Indian or pre-Columbian art to our time. In some of the most beautiful manifestations of sculpture, be it dancing Shiva or in the miniature temples of Guerrero, there appears very clearly the search for a junction between stillness and motion, time arrested and time passing. We believe that this confrontation will give our period its uniqueness. (pp. 22-23)

According to Capra (1996), Prigogine discovered the co-existence of stability and motion in his research on dissipative structures—the revolutionary insights that opened the door to a new paradigm. All life forms were considered dissipative structures, open systems far from equilibrium, taking in energy and matter, and changing over time. How did that concept create a different perspective of human beings? Descartes (Audi, 1999) imagined the human structure, as well as all nature except for the mind, to be a group of interacting parts much like the newly invented clocks of his time. The mind of human beings made us unique in nature. But the mechanistic view of nature led to a paradigm using epistemological tools of analyzing and reducing the whole to its parts, forming concepts that built a reductionist knowledge structure. Descartes thus began a cultural tradition of reifying mind above nature including the body, ignoring the value of sense experience. However, the same tools of analysis and reduction were used for understanding mind.

Prigogine's (Capra, 1996) work with dissipative structures challenged the mechanistic paradigm. His research defined the nature of open systems far from equilibrium and replaced Newton's ideas of a universe moving toward entropy. Newton's work was based on the study of closed systems that settled into a stable state near thermal equilibrium (or death). By contrast, "open systems maintain themselves far from equilibrium in this 'steady state' characterized by continual flow and change" (Capra, 1996, p. 48). The structure of those open systems was important. They were open to energy and matter from the environment but were tightly configured. This balance of structure and change, order and dissipation included Prigogine's idea of "points of instability at which new structures and forms of order can emerge" (p. 180).

Prigogine was the first to discover the important link between the structure of non-equilibrium and the mathematical pattern of nonlinearity. Linear mathematics evolved from the geometry of Galileo and the algebra of Islamic philosophers to Descartes' invention of making algebraic formulas visible as geometric shapes (Capra, 1996). Equations with straight lines on an x and y-axis were linear equations; those with curves such as a parabola were called nonlinear equations. Linear equations were additive, while nonlinear equations were non-additive.

> Additive relations can be exemplified by the function y=f(2x). The value of y grows additively, by 2 as x increases by 1. So we have 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, etc. Each succeeding value of y results from *adding* a fixed amount (in this case 2) to the preceding value….
>
> We can contrast this with non-additive relations, which can be exemplified by the function $y=f(2^x)$. The value of y grows non-additively; so we have 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc. Each succeeding value of y results from *multiplying* by a fixed number (in this case 2) the preceding value of y.…
>
> Most of our most important relations involve such complex factors. A simple example involves the start of a family. 2 (parents) + 1 (baby) = much more than a simple 3; an entirely new complex of relations develops.… (Kodish & Kodish, 2001, p. 84)

An example of non-additivity was given by ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich:

> A key feature of exponential [non-additive] growth is that it often seems to start slowly and finish fast. A classic example used to illustrate this is the pond weed that doubles each day the amount of pond surface covered and is projected to cover the entire pond in thirty days. The question is, how much of the pond will be covered in twenty-nine days? The answer, of course, is that just half of the pond will be covered in twenty-nine days. The weed will then double once more and cover the entire pond the next day. As this example indicates, exponential growth contains the potential for big surprises. (Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1990, p. 15)

The distinction between linear and nonlinear mathematics explained the failure of the reductionistic paradigm to accurately describe living systems. According to Capra (1996), Newton's and Descartes' visions of a mechanical universe combined with linear mathematics defined the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

and the nature of closed systems moving toward equilibrium. Newton's differential calculus derived from linear equations and his mathematics was used to describe the laws of motion. As with any theory, often seemingly minor elements were ignored. He considered one force, friction to be irrelevant and ignored it in his calculations of universal forces. The discovery and application of nonlinear mathematics of chaos theory—finding order within seemingly random "noise"—led to Prigogine's understanding of dissipative structures. He was able to model the behavior of friction and heat with nonlinear equations, thus studying the character of phase transitions and emergence of new forms of organization.

In closed systems, initial conditions were not important. But outside the range of linear equations, initial conditions were critical.

> Nonlinear equations usually have more than one solution; the higher the nonlinearity, the greater the number of solutions. This means that new situations may emerge at any moment. Mathematically speaking, the system encounters a bifurcation point in such a case, at which it may branch off into an entirely new state.… [T]he behavior of the system at the bifurcation point (in other words, which one of several available new branches it will take) depends on the previous history of the system. In the nonlinear range initial conditions are no longer "forgotten."
>
> Moreover, Prigogine's theory shows that the behavior of a dissipative structure far from equilibrium no longer follows any universal law but is unique to the system. Near equilibrium we find repetitive phenomena and universal laws. As we move away from equilibrium, we move from the universal to the unique, toward richness and variety. This, of course, is a well-known characteristic of life (Capra, 1996, p. 182).

Systems near equilibrium are somewhat stable and predictable. In systems far from equilibrium, the decision at the bifurcation point is unpredictable due to fluctuations in the environment at the moment of decision as well as the system's history. Once the system decision is made, the jump to a new form of organization leads to a condition of irreversibility. Irreversibility is the mechanism that brings order out of chaos (Capra,

1996). "Thus the conceptual shift in science advocated by Prigogine was one from deterministic reversible processes to indeterminate and irreversible ones" (p. 185).

Another source of unpredictability, discovered when mathematically modeling an open system, is due to the nature of nonlinear equations and unrelated to bifurcation points. The 'butterfly effect'—"minute changes in the system's initial state [such as rounding decimals] will lead over time to large-scale consequences" (Capra, 1996, p. 134)—was discovered from computer modeling of weather conditions using nonlinear equations. Sensitivity to initial conditions made long-range prediction impossible.

The points to remember in this passage are the qualities of an open system's structure—a state far from equilibrium, balance of stability and change between bifurcation points, movement toward "catastrophe" or a bifurcation point provide opportunity for transformation to a higher ordered state, and the path chosen at the bifurcation point is unpredictable, irreversible, and dependent on the system's history along with chance environmental conditions at the moment of path transition.

Self-organization

According to Capra (1996), the concepts of self-organization developed from early models of systems thinking in biology and cybernetics (mathematical models of logic in neural networks). In the early 1960s, a group of discoveries across multiple disciplines began to coalesce into a theory of self-organization. This group included Prigogine's discovery of dissipative structures in thermodynamics, laser theory developed by Herman Haken, Manfred Eigen's work on catalytic cycles in chemical systems, the theory of autopoiesis (self-making) by neuroscientist Humberto Maturana, and the Gaia theory proposed by atmospheric chemist, James Lovelock (Capra, 1996). The core

assumptions of self-organization arose from those discoveries and the application of the nonlinear mathematics of complexity science.

Capra (1996) theorized that self-organization includes *structures, patterns, and processes* derived from the above paradigms. The type of system that can self-organize is an open system far from equilibrium. Prigogine called those *dissipative structures*. Tornados and hurricanes as well as human beings are examples of those structures. The *process* of emergence is also found in living and non-living systems. This process arises from the *pattern* of nonlinear connections (including feedback loops) of the system components and fluctuations in the environment. Cognition, the creation of novel structures and modes of behavior in the process of development, learning, and evolution, is the process distinguishing living from non-living systems (Capra, 1996). The cognitive properties unique to humans are those of abstracting and languaging, qualities that influence perception, conscious awareness, and development of cultural systems.

The pattern of organization, structure, and life process are the three key criteria for identifying the common elements of living systems. Capra (1996) defined these as: (a) pattern of organization, "the configuration of relationships that determines the system's essential characteristics," (p. 161) (b) structure, "the physical embodiment of the system's pattern of organization," (p. 161) and (c) life process, "the activity involved in the continual embodiment of the system's pattern of organization" (p. 161). Pattern and structure of the material world are the characteristics studied from the ancient philosophers through to modern science. Complexity science added the quality of process as key to understanding systems. Distilling the characteristics that determine all systems to three components led to Capra's conceptual framework linking the emergence

of non-living phenomenon to living systems, ecological communities, and human communities.

Capra (1996) gave an example of the distinction between structure, pattern, and process in a non-living versus a living system.

> In the case of a bicycle, the pattern of organization is represented by the design sketches that are used to build the bicycle, the structure is a specific physical bicycle, and the link between pattern and structure is in the mind of the designer. In the case of a living organism, however, the pattern of organization is always embodied in the organism's structure, and the link between pattern and structure lies in the process of continual embodiment. (p. 160)

Capra chronicled how discoveries in systems theories such as cybernetics, chemistry, and Prigogine's thermodynamics evolved into Maturana and Varela's theory of autopoietic networks in cognitive science. Maturana, in his autopoietic theory, clarified the importance of distinguishing pattern, structure, and process. I find it important to provide historical discoveries leading to a theory of self-organization before describing Maturana's theory.

Cybernetic researchers—engineers, neuroscientists, mathematicians, and social scientists in the 1940s—concerned with the relationship between animals and machines, communication and control, discovered the importance of feedback loops. "Feedback …is the control of a machine on the basis of its *actual* performance rather than its *expected* performance. In a broader sense feedback has come to mean the conveying of information about the outcome of any process or activity to its source" (Capra, 1996, p. 57). Feedback loops are the systems way of learning and maintaining homeostatis. Cyberneticists discovered two forms of feedback loops—"self-balancing (or 'negative') and self-reinforcing (or 'positive') feedback" (p. 59). According to Capra, positive

feedback loops are often found in runaway effects or vicious cycles and are essential structures for the emergence of life forms from chemical processes.

Cybernetics research played an important role in the study of cognition in psychology for the next forty years, creating the concepts of neural networks. However, their limited success with artificial intelligence in computers led other neuroscience researchers to explore biology and natural systems, again stepping out of a mechanistic paradigm creating a systemic view of cognition.

Hypercycles, discovered by biochemist Manfred Eigen, were an example of prebiological chemical systems thought to contribute to early life forms. Hypercycles are loops of catalytic cycles forming networks or self-organizing chemical systems. "A catalyst is a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction without itself being changed in the process. Catalytic reactions are crucial processes in the chemistry of life" (p. 92). Enzymes are examples of catalytic networks. Eigen studied catalytic reactions involved in enzymes and observed that

> in biochemical systems far from equilibrium, i.e., systems exposed to energy flows, different catalytic reactions combine to form complex networks that may contain closed loops…. These catalytic cycles are at the core of self-organizing chemical systems such as the chemical clocks studied by Prigogine and they also play an essential role in the metabolic functions of living organisms…. One of the most striking lifelike properties of hypercycles is that they evolve by passing through instabilities and creating successively higher levels of organization that are characterized by increasing diversity and richness of components and structures (p. 93-94).

Capra described the outcome of research in these varied fields on self-organization as defining the three characteristics of self-organizing systems: "self-organization is the spontaneous emergence of new structures and new forms of behavior in open systems far from equilibrium, characterized by internal feedback loops and

described mathematically by nonlinear equations" (p. 85). The concept of self-organization was later incorporated and refined in Maturana & Varela's (1980) theory of living systems, autopoiesis.

Autopoiesis

Capra (1996) described Maturana's background in cybernetics and his early study of color perception as it led to a radical new understanding of physical networks and their formation of cognition—autopoiesis. Maturana also developed an ontology of cognition, the Santiago theory, for all living systems from his theory of autopoiesis. In the Santiago theory, he identified the importance of language in the development of human consciousness.

According to Capra (1996), the theory of autopoiesis resulted from Maturana's discovery that the nervous system's circular organization was the common organization of all living systems. Not all living systems have nervous systems, but the circular organization allows for evolution while maintaining the circularity. The system, thus, is self-organizing. In addition to being self-organizing, Maturana postulated that it was also self-referring, "so that perception cannot be viewed as the representation of an external reality but must be understood as the continual creation of new relationships within the neural network" (p. 96).

For Maturana, this circular organization was the process of cognition. Maturana and his colleague, Varela, then developed computer models using cellular automata to model catalytic loops that developed into self-organizing structures. They called their mathematical design for living systems autopoiesis: "*Auto,* of course, means 'self' and refers to the autonomy of self-organizing systems; and *poiesis*—which shares the same

Greek root as the word 'poetry'—means 'making'. So *autopoiesis* means 'self-making'" (Capra, 1996, p. 97). Maturana and Varela made the important step of clarifying the abstract network of relations for all living systems, the self-making process designed to reproduce or transform the components within the network. The outcome of each systems operation was its own organization or "continual embodiment" (p. 98).

Chemists and biologists subsequently supported Maturana and Varela's research, according to Capra. Biologist Gail Fleischaker summarized the three properties of an autopoietic network as:

> the system must be self-bounded, self-generating, and self-perpetuating. To be *self-bounded* means that the system's extension is determined by a boundary that is an integral part of the network. To be *self-generating* means that all components, including those of the boundary, are produced by processes within the network. To be *self-perpetuating* means that the production processes continue over time, so that all components are continually replaced by the system's process of transformation (Fleischaker, 1990, p. 130).

Networks above the level of multicellular organisms or ecosystems are far too complex to detail the evolution of intricate self-organizing patterns. But researchers were discovering interconnected systems maintaining all life shared those same simple principles. "All living systems are networks of smaller components, and the web of life as a whole is a multilayered structure of living systems nesting within other living systems—networks within networks" (Capra, 1996, p. 209). The purpose of the individual layers is to contribute to the making of the whole.

According to Capra (1996), Maturana also identified two ways that systems managed the flow of energy and matter from interacting with other systems and their environment while maintaining structural integrity. One was self-renewal, such as tissues

and organs having a cycle of cell replacement built into the structure. The other form for creating new connections within the network was developmental,

> as a consequence of environmental influences or as a result of the system's internal dynamics. According to the theory of autopoiesis, a living system interacts with its environment through "structural coupling," that is through recurrent interactions, each of which triggers structural changes in the system (Capra, 1996, p. 219).

The nature of the living system determined how the environmental influence would change the system and alter its future behavior. According to Capra (1996), "a structurally coupled system is a learning system" (p. 219). Non-living systems *reacted* to environmental stimuli according to basic laws of Newtonian mechanism. An example Capra used was a person kicking a rock versus a person kicking a dog. A rock *reacted* according to the laws of motion. Living systems *responded* to the same stimuli with "structural changes according to its own nature and (nonlinear) pattern of organization. The resulting behavior is generally unpredictable.… [T]hese changes will in turn alter its future behavior" (p. 219). According to the Santiago theory, "intelligence is manifest in the richness and flexibility of an organism's structural coupling" (p. 269).

Cognition

The field of cognitive science and the emergence of the third property of living systems—process—was deeply influenced by cybernetic research in communication systems, network patterns, and closed feedback loops (Capra, 1996). The work of researchers in artificial intelligence (AI) defined cognition or the process of knowing as information processing. However, the computer model of intelligence could not be translated to the human brain. Computers, unlike humans, process information based on rules applied sequentially (Capra, 1996). Studies of human expertise and learning

demonstrate the contrast between machine functioning and human cognition. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) found,

> [O]ne has to abandon the traditional view that a beginner starts with specific cases and, as he becomes more proficient, abstracts and interiorizes more and more sophisticated rules.… Skill acquisition moves in just the opposite direction—from abstract rules to particular cases. It seems that a beginner makes inferences using rules and facts just like a heuristically programmed computer, but with talent and a great deal of involved experience the beginner develops into an expert who intuitively sees what to do without applying rules (p. 108).

Capra (1996) emphasized the intuitive grasp of "an entire constellation of facts" (p. 278)—parts-to-whole gestalt—as learning advanced.

Capra described Maturana's Santiago theory of cognition as a radical departure from the Cartesian mind. In his theory of autopoiesis, cognition included biological and emotional responses to the environment, not just thinking.

> The human nervous system does not process any information (in the sense of discrete elements existing ready-made in the outside world, to be picked up by the cognitive system), but interacts with the environment by continually modulating its structure (Capra, 1996, p. 68).

> [A]t any moment its physical structure is a record of previous structural changes. The nervous system does not process information from the outside world but, on the contrary, *brings forth* a world in the process of cognition.
>
> Human cognition involves language and abstract thinking, and thus symbols and mental representations, but abstract thought is only a small part of human cognition and generally is not the basis for our everyday decisions and actions. Human decisions are never completely rational but are always colored by emotions, and human thought is always embedded in the bodily sensations and processes that contribute to the full spectrum of cognition.
>
> As computer scientists Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores point out in their book, *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, rational thought filters out most of that cognitive spectrum and, in so doing, creates a "blindness of abstraction." Like blinders, the terms we adopt to express ourselves limit the range of our view….
>
> For example, the very essence of intelligence is to act appropriately when a problem is not clearly defined and solutions are not evident. Intelligent human behavior in such situations is based on common sense, accumulated from lived experience (Capra, 1996, p. 275).

Thus the cognition of human systems is different than the cognition of the mind based on cybernetic assumptions. According to Maturana's theory of autopoiesis, cognition was a property of all living organisms and essential for the process of self-organization. The principles of autopoiesis were extended to human consciousness in Maturana and Varela's Santiago theory.

> The new concept of cognition, the process of knowing, is thus much broader than that of thinking. It involves perception, emotion, and action—the entire process of life. In the human realm cognition also includes language, conceptual thinking, and all the other attributes of human consciousness. The general concept, however, is much broader and does not necessarily involve thinking (Capra, 1996, p. 175).

Cognition was not dependent on abstractions though abstracting is an important characteristic of human consciousness. Knowing is a quality separate from language and dependent on the relationship between the organism and the environment.

> There are no objectively existing structures [in the world]; there is no pregiven territory of which we can make a map—the map making itself brings forth the features of the territory.
>
> We know that cats or birds will see trees, for example, very differently from the way we do, because they perceive light in different frequency ranges. Thus the shapes and textures of the "trees" they bring forth will be different from ours. When we see a tree, we are not inventing reality. But the ways in which we delineate objects and identify patterns out of the multitude of sensory inputs we receive depends on our physical constitution. As Maturana and Varela (1980) would say, the ways in which we can couple structurally to our environment, and thus the world we bring forth, depend on our own structure. (quoted in Capra, 1996, p. 271)

The common assumption that cognition "is a *representation* of an independently existing world" (Capra, 1996, p. 270) was contradicted by Maturana's research. Instead, the organism brings forth a world based on its structure. Similarly structured organisms bring forth similar worlds. Maturana and Varela made the point that there was a material world but its features were not independent of the process of cognition.

Language and abstract thought are the common elements of humans. Representation and information are part of that language. But according to the Santiago theory, language and cognition are separate.

> The ability to abstract is a key characteristic of human consciousness…and because of that ability we can and do use mental representations, symbols, and information. However, these are not characteristics of the general process of cognition that is common to all living systems (Capra, 1996, p. 272).

To help make this point clear, Capra discussed how meaning was derived or extracted from contextually driven experiences. Information or facts were generalizations extracted from across contexts, but meaning did not reside in the fact separate from context. Capra used the example of the color red. Colors had no meaning outside of context. Yet the color red had particular meaning in the context of city traffic and stopping at an intersection.

Cognition also involves more than the brain. The brain is just one structure that supports the process of cognition. Capra also described the new discoveries in the field of immunology. The immune system became viewed as a cognitive, self-organizing network. Then, in the mid-1980s, neuroscientist Candace Pert, discovered the nervous system, endocrine system, and immune system formed a single psychosomatic network and peptides were the "family of molecular messengers.… Peptides are the biochemical manifestations of emotions; they play a crucial role in the coordinating activities of the immune system; they interlink and integrate mental, emotion, and biological activities" (Capra, 1996, p. 283). In addition, it was found that peptides resided throughout the body. "[S]cientists now hypothesize that each peptide may evoke a unique emotional 'tone.' The entire group of sixty to seventy peptides may constitute a universal biochemical language of emotions" (p. 284).

Capra claimed the importance of this finding was reintegration of brain and body, mind and emotions. Emotions colored thoughts and perceptions and created a common human experience.

Role of Language and Communication

Rethinking the cybernetic definition of cognition and the concept of each organism bringing forth a world requires taking a different look at the role of language and communication. Capra (1996) discussed the evolution of language as the coordination of behavior for the purpose of facilitating cooperation rather than transmitting information. In addition, biological evidence contradicts the computer model of cognition. Small insects process visual tasks faster than a computer sequentially processes information. And, evidence about the brain determined information was not localized to specific areas of the brain (unlike computers), but maintained global coherence—"a shift of focus…from information processing to emergent properties of neural networks" (p. 266).

Thus, Maturana's Santiago theory (theory of human cognition) followed from his theory of autopoiesis (theory of living cognition). The connection between language and human consciousness was primary. Consciousness was a level of mind or cognition characterized by self-awareness. Capra (1996) described how Maturana built upon the same concept of interconnected networks and emergent properties to build his understanding of human consciousness.

First, a living organism engaged with the environment through structural coupling. The environmental interactions triggered structural changes within the organism. The key to the Santiago theory was "the living system not only specifies these

structural changes, it also specifies *which perturbations from the environment trigger them"* (Capra, 1996, p. 267). The decision-making process of the organism constituted the act of bringing forth a world.

> Cognition, then is not a representation of an independently existing world, but rather a continual *bringing forth of a world* through the process of living. The interactions of a living system with its environment are cognitive interactions, and the process of living itself is a process of cognition. In the words of Maturana and Varela, 'To live is to know.' (Quoted in Capra, 1996, p. 267).

The Santiago theory specified that cognition had two functions, the autopoietic functions and the bringing forth a world functions. Autopoiesis was the process of learning, including interactions with the environment through structural coupling and changes in interconnective networks resulting from the interactions. The choice of environmental triggers included a filtering system determined by the unique cognitive system, such as filtering out sound stimuli beyond a particular range. Each system thus brought forth its own world and interacted with other systems in their worlds. Increasing the range and differentiation of structural couplings led to greater cognitive complexity and functioning.

Communication in the Santiago theory was the "*coordination of behavior* among living organisms through mutual structural coupling. Such mutual coordination of behavior is the key characteristic of communication for all living organisms" (Capra, 1996, p. 287). Animal behavior had two forms, learned and instinctive. Maturana called the learned coordination of behavior 'linguistic' and he believed it was the basis of language. However, language did not arise until "there is *communication about communication*. In other words, the process of 'languaging,' as Maturana called it, takes place when there is a coordination of coordinations of behavior" (p. 288). According to

Capra, Maturana hypothesized that the creation of objects and language for objects led to the act of creating abstract concepts.

The different language systems arose creating a network of relationships of shared meaning within "a semantic domain" (p. 290). According to Capra (1996),

> The uniqueness of being human lies in our ability to continually weave the linguistic network in which we are embedded. To be human is to exist in language. In language we bring forth our world.… This human world centrally includes our inner world of abstract thought, concepts, symbols, mental representations, and self-awareness. To be human is to be endowed with reflective consciousness: As we know how we know, we bring forth ourselves. (p. 290)

Capra emphasized how the history of our structural coupling with its tendency to create independent objects, including an independent self, was the source of deep human frustration and anxiety. He recommended that we think systemically,

> shifting our conceptual focus from objects to relationships. Only then can we realize that identity, individuality, and autonomy do not imply separateness and independence.… To regain our full humanity, we have to regain our experience of connectedness with the entire web of life. (p. 295-296)

Returning to my voice

As I summarized Fritjof Capra's ideas, I struggled to maintain my own voice. I noticed how I subsumed my voice beneath Capra's words. I told myself things like, "He said it much better than I could," "I have to give him credit for all his ideas, yet his ideas reflect my own. So, I don't know how to bring my own ideas in without plagiarizing his," and "He's the expert. I have to use his voice to convince others of the value of this work." I observed how my self-critical thoughts created anxiety.

The synthesis and writing process was slow and labored. Each act of precision, wanting to capture the accuracy of Capra's meaning or making sure I quoted authors

according to APA standards, led to feelings of rigidity and control. Re-reading the piece, it felt voiceless and devoid of the enthusiasm I felt as I originally read Capra's book.

Thus, I felt disappointed with my performance. I then noticed my perfectionistic self-judgment and wondered how I could learn from that experience. I remembered my interview with Bill Wittliff, his story about how he gave up on writing stories during his teen years because he compared himself to great writers. His insecurity kept him from doing the work he loved. He said he realized at the age of 30 that he had created the prison he lived in and he could let himself out if he chose. He decided to become a professional writer. He began by always writing the first draft for himself, to reduce the anxiety that stifled his creativity. Subsequent drafts were for others, but he wrote what was in his heart for himself.

I decided to keep the above summary as a demonstration of my learning process. I wanted to compare my voice in the segment on Capra with Korzybsk's and Lakoff's summaries. Could I summarize Korzybski's work differently, more fluidly, while communicating the vital aspects of his work?

Alfred Korzybski

I never knew of Alfred Korzybski's (1933) work until I found a vague reference to his book, *Science and Sanity*. His theory of General Semantics resolved his search to understand human nature and conflict (Kodish & Kodish, 2001).

According to Kodish and Kodish (2001), he was born into the noble class in Poland, learned mathematics and languages from his engineering father, volunteered for the military in World War I at the age of 35, served as an intelligence officer in the

Second Russian Army and was injured. He eventually settled in the United States after the war. Trained as a chemical engineer, he was a scholar and humanitarian. His deep concern for the question of what makes humans human arose from the devastation he saw during the war and witnessing the collapse of the Russian social structure. His research led to his notion of time-binding (see definition below). He became friends with mathematician Cassius Keyser, studied the latest developments in sciences of the early 1900s, and observed psychiatric patients at a Washington, D.C. hospital, learning how people evaluate their experiences.

He devoted the later half of his life to developing, teaching, and experientially applying general semantic principles. His theory was used in psychiatric facilities during World War II. It became an important element of Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy and Yvonne Agazarian's System-Centered Therapy.

His work is valuable for this research because he reconceptualized how we abstract and identified an alternative language structure that changed perception to reflect current scientific findings. Fluent in many languages, he studied the rigid, limiting structure of Euro-American language. He found it evolved from Aristotelian laws of thought, assumptions based on the best science of the time, but never updated to reflect modern scientific discoveries about the world. He studied how that linguistic structure became neurologically translated into individual perception. The process of abstracting (selecting nervous system stimuli and constructing 'objects' for the purpose of interpretation, Kodish & Kodish, 2001), based on the Aristotelian structure was often the source of confusion and misinterpretation. He formulated a non-aristotelian system he

called General Semantics to overcome those limitations and more closely reflect interconnected person-in-environment relationships.

Korzybski's (1933) research detailed the links later described by Maturana & Varela's (1980) ideas of structural coupling with the environment and human consciousness—using language to extend self-awareness. His work also supported Capra's (1996) historical description of philosophical and scientific paradigms and how those frameworks impact our current understanding or worldview.

Though his work predated the work of complexity scientists, Korzybski based his research on the same mathematical assumptions found in complexity science. His non-aristotelian system was founded on the ideas of non-linearity, open systems, and interconnected layers of linguistic meaning from the person/environment physical experience to the person/social interaction level.

I briefly describe key components of his system—his concept of time-binding, his description of the abstracting process, and his differentiation between the Aristotelian and non-aristotelian principles. In addition I include his techniques for applying his non-aristotelian system and discuss how it influences perception and self-awareness.

Korzybski's ontology and epistomology

Korzybski (1933) created a "new functional definition of 'man', as …based on an analysis of uniquely human *potentialities*; namely, that each generation may begin where the former left off. This characteristic I called the 'time-binding' capacity" (p. xxxii). His assumption about the nature of humans was what he called an organism-as-a-whole-in-an-environment (external and internal) unity. People were not separate from their environment or split into body, mind, emotions, intellect, intuitions, etc. He likened his

concept of humans as similar to the Einstein-Minkowski unification of space-time in physics. He used techniques, like the hyphens in this paragraph, to remind our nervous systems of the reality of the wholeness of experience.

Time-binding is a unique quality of humans. According to Korzybski, plants were chemical-binders because they transformed energy from the sun into chemicals used for their growth. Animals used plants for food, so transformed energy from chemistry-binding into movement through space. Thus Korzybski called animals space-binders. Humans also used plant energy and moved, thus incorporating both chemical-binding and space-binding. The use of language to communicate knowledge and information across generations, to develop socially, led Korzybski to call humans time-binders. He considered his new concept of humans as functional, fact-based, and scientific.

The theory of General Semantics is concerned with how people evaluate their inner and outer experience and make sense of those evaluations. Their ability to evaluate their lived experience is critical due to the exponential nature of time. Korzybski (1933) understood the 'accelerating accelerations' of difficulties and miscalculations within human systems (and thus social systems) and recommended radical revisions to our language system.

> We learned from anthropology that the degrees of socio-cultural developments of different civilizations depend on their capacity to produce higher and higher abstractions, which eventually culminate in a *general consciousness of abstracting*, the very key to further human evolution…. As Whitehead justly said, 'A civilization which cannot burst through its current abstractions is doomed to sterility after a very limited period of progress' (p. xxxiii).

Korzybski studied the current system of abstracting in language and discovered it was based on Aristotle's either/or assumptions. He found that our orientation to the world was based on this two-valued system—it was either night *or* day*,* hot *or* cold,

democrat *or* republican. Language systems were important for teaching purposes. However, he said most issues in life were not so sharply distinguished and the existing language system limited our ability to accurately evaluate our experience. The non-aristotelian system he proposed incorporated abstractions based on 'degrees'.

Abstracting

Years ago, I was curious about how computers translated electrical energy into a system recording every keystroke and creating a printed document. I discussed my question with a friend trained in computer science and he told me, simply, that layers of language, from a binary (on/off) switching system to more complex interconnected languages, translated my keystrokes into words on a computer screen. I used his explanation as a metaphor to help me understand the human process of translating sensory energy into a creative form, such as the words on this page or a painting. An aspect of artistic voice is proficiency with the tool of symbolic language and the ability to extend language to reflect experience, just as computer scientists extend the tool of the computer by creating new languages.

However, Korzybski's (1933) non-aristotelian system was not a binary system but one based on degrees. It helped me to understand artists' ability to perceive various values, hues, and textures in their experience and translate their experience into symbolic meaning or form, more accurately reflecting direct experience. Korzybski understood that human achievement rested on the use of symbols and advocated the proper understanding of its structure and ways of functioning. Otherwise, he felt "the rulers," or those engaged in the manipulation of symbols, could misuse it.

He developed a model for the process of transforming experience into symbolic forms. He believed understanding this process was critical for increasing awareness of assumptions and conscious use of symbols. He called the model a structural differential. The structural differential was a visual devise to communicate the process of abstraction.

Structural differential (adapted from Korzybski, 1933)

Event (Process) Level	→	Object Level	→	Description Level	→	Inference Level 1	→	Inference Level 2	→	Et Cetera

Event level: A space-time event happening inside, outside, or on the skin of the person. An event cannot be recognized in its entirety due to the infinite subatomic nature of the experience. Korzybski called this level the silent level because it preceded language.

Object level: Objects of perception including things we see, touch, taste, smell, etc. The object has a finite size abstracted from the event level by neurological responses. An event cannot be recognized by the senses but an object can. Perception consists of the nervous system mapping of an event and forming objects.

Description level: The first verbal level. The number of characteristics ascribed to the object. The label given the object is also an abstraction and based on the meaning the object has for us, including the qualities of neurological responses such as warmth, brightness, etc. "Certain details are included, potentially giving a similarity of structure between this level and the object level. Certain details are also left out in descriptively mapping non-verbal 'perceptions.'" (Kodish & Kodish, 2001, p. 92)

Inference level 1: A statement about the object abstracted from the description level. Also known as a fact. This level includes inferences, assumptions, premises, conclusions, hypotheses, generalizations, theories, etc.

Inference level 2: A higher order abstraction based on level 1 inference. Humans have the self-reflexive capacity for an infinite level of higher order abstractions—statements about statements, or generalizations about generalizations. Korzybski (1933) believed animals also had the capacity to abstract but their level of ability was finite.

The process of abstracting was nonlinear meaning the levels of abstraction contained feedback loops. Inferences, assumptions, etc. shaped perception, which in turn influenced the selection of stimuli and later descriptions and inferences.

Korzybski believed that consciousness of abstracting was the difference between humans and animals. He recognized that Aristotle systematized the language of his day based on his unconscious awareness of abstracting or what he called identification. The confusion resulted from assuming that two structures existing at different levels were exactly the same in all respects. For example, he described a situation where a man, asked if he wanted an apple, assumed a Roma apple was the same as a Red Delicious apple because he carried a stereotype of applies and had not discriminated the two based on color, shape, or taste. Korzybski (1933) reiterated that even if the man was offered two Red Delicious apples, the two would still be different possibly based on time they were picked, tree or orchard generating the apple, etc. The assumption that all apples are the same impact the response to the offer, the man's quality of experience, and his ability to learn from his choice.

Perception is the active attempt to make sense out of the cues we receive. Kodish & Kodish (2001), researchers trained in general semantics, described how our attempts are based on past abstractions leading us to make unconscious, split-second assumptions about present experiences.

> The degree of shock we experience may be a function of the level of our awareness of the hypothetical, or inferential, nature of our 'perceptions' and their dependence on our language, assumptions, etc. Higher levels of awareness of this can help us avoid shock. It can help us delay our immediate, automatic behavior and perhaps avoid some costly mistakes (p. 72).

Aristotelian and non-aristotelian systems

Korzybski (1933) identified the structure/function nature of the Aristotelian system. It ignored the relationship nature (or *process* as Capra described) of the world and expressed everything in a subject-predicate form. Or, in other words, the world was

divided into ‘things’ and ‘what things do.’ Nouns were things or subjects and predicates were verbs or adjectives. Aristotle described his laws of thought resulting from the subject-predicate structure: (a) the premise of identity, a thing is what it is (A is A), (b) the premise of excluded middle, anything must be either a particular category or class of thing or not be that thing (A or not A), and (c) the premise of non-contradiction, anything cannot be a particular thing and not be that particular thing (cannot be both A and not-A).

Korzybski (1933) made the point that Aristotle’s laws of thought applied to objects with symmetrical relations, meaning what holds between A and B, also holds for B and A. For example, if A is the spouse of B, then B is the spouse of A. In symmetrical relationships, order was irrelevant. However, most relations were asymmetrical meaning “If a relation is such that, if it holds between A and B, it *never* holds between B and A” (Korzybski, 1933, p. 189). The example he gave was “if A is a father, or mother, or husband of B, B is *never* a father, or mother, or husband of A” (p. 189). Order could never be reversed in asymmetrical relations. And many of the important terms we used were asymmetrical, such a *“before, after, greater, more, less, above, to the right, to the left, part,* and *whole”* (p. 189).

Asymmetry was critically important for part-to-whole relationships, especially for nonlinear relationships found in open systems. Asymmetry established order and order was essential for mapping the neurological process as well as any other relationship in nature. Korzybski (1933) noted an interesting irony regarding the subject-predicate structure. If the structure expressed a relationship between the observer and the observed, excluding humans, the relationship would also be asymmetrical. For example, “if a leaf appears green to me, I certainly do not ‘appear green’ to the leaf!” (p. 191).

Aristotle's laws made sense before the invention of microscopes and other tools that contributed to modern physical science and before the study of other languages/cultures developed in the social sciences. In his time, the senses were the only instruments for building knowledge about the world. The consequence of Aristotle's macroscopic view of the world led to assumptions based on sense experience like the world being flat.

> It leads us to assume that things we can't sense, like germs, can't have effects. It leads us to assume that qualities reside in things: 'The rose is red.' 'The boy is lazy.' It leads us to assume that the way we and our culture categorize things is the ways things are: 'An apple is an apple.'…It leads us to assume that some*thing* happened or someone experienced some*thing*, some *thing* must exist to have caused the happening or experience: 'My boss caused my failure.' 'Because I'm aware of reading these pages, I must have some 'thing', like a 'mind', causing that awareness.' It leads us to assume that 'things' are separate from what they do.
>
> In sum, following the Aristotelian orientation leads us to view the world as static and unchanging. It leads us to assume we can know all. It leads us to assume our categories exist in the world and cannot be changed. It leads us to look for single causes for events. It leads us to evaluate in either/or terms. It leads us to a lack of awareness of our own evaluating process. This orientation so permeates our culture that these ways of evaluating still, for most people, seem like common sense (Kodish & Kodish, 2001, pp. 131-132).

Korzybski's non-aristotelian system did not exclude the Aristotelian system, since he believed there were aspects that were useful. However, he reshaped many of the basic assumptions. Following is Korzybski's (Kodish & Kodish, 2001, p. 133) comparison of the assumptions underlying both systems:

Aristotelian system	**Non-aristotelian system**
A *is* A (Identity)	A map *is not* the territory (Non-identity)
Anything is *either* A or not A (Excluded middle)	A map covers *not all* the territory (Non-allness)
Something cannot be both A and not-A (Non-contradiction)	A map is self-reflexive (Self-reflexiveness)

Korzybski (1933) described a system based on two principles: "(a) Words *are not* the things we are speaking about; and (b) There *is no* such thing as an object in absolute isolation" (p. 60). He felt the only link between the empirical world and the map/languages was structure. He believed structure, relations, and multi-dimensional order were reflected through abstractions and the more closely the map represented the world, the less confusion resulted.

Korzybski's (1933) research clarified the confusion I experienced as I attempted to define artistic voice from an elemental or Aristotelian perspective. It was not a thing with a function. I believed it had a structure and a process, however, and found Korzybski's (1933) new system could contribute to more accurately mapping the structure of artistic voice.

The devices he used to expand language usage and how those would be useful for this research included:

1. Indexing—the use of subscripts to discriminate between individuals, matters of degree, levels of abstraction, and environmental conditions. Subscripts were useful in mathematics, used to label different variables, i.e. x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, etc. I will look for similarities in artistic voice between artists, however, each artist is unique. Thus, indexing is a device to help discriminate between the general idea of artistic voice and any specific artistic $voice_1$, artistic $voice_2$, etc. I need to describe.

2. Dating—Indexing differences in time. Dating helps differentiate an individual at a given date from that individual at another date.

3. Etc.—A device to say that we could always say more.

4. Quotes—A device Kozybski used to indicate elementalist terms such as mind or body, terms assuming separation but not separated in reality. It was also used to indicate terms were used metaphorically.

5. Hyphens—Used to connect terms that suggest separation but could best be understood as a unified process. I will use this device because I need a tool for describing unified processes such as person-in-context experience.

Korzybski used the above devices as he wrote his own book. I found they triggered my attention, like a red flag, reminding me to step out of the automatic interpretations I used while reading. In addition, my awareness that 'the world was round' rather than 'flat' changed rapidly and I began to experience 'seeing' interconnected relationships, acting from that reality.

Korzybski also discussed the value of contemplation prior to speaking. He described the importance of slowing down to avoid reacting automatically from an old map. Contemplation allowed time for in-the-moment physical experience to inform awareness and formulate responses based on the differences of the current experience from past maps.

Returning to my voice

As I complete the summary of Korzybski's general semantics, I feel less anxious and self-critical of my work than when I finished Capra's summary. Yet I continue to notice a sense of judgment, an underlying thought that I should be doing something different, perhaps integrating Capra and Korzybski into a cohesive discussion rather than presenting them separately.

Time pressures are outweighing the gnawing uncertainty and desire to continue editing. I notice my thoughts regarding the writing ahead of me. Kozybski's structural differential comes to mind. I decide the level of abstraction is too close to the object level, meaning, if Capra's writing is the object and a summary I might write about Capra's work is a level 1 inference, I am including too much detail. I need to push

myself to the level 2 inference level, pulling together how Lakoff, Korzybski, and Capra's research are similar and different, how I am using their conclusions to begin weaving a structure for artistic voice. I am assuming it is clear how they created layers of meaning, from the physical to the metaphoric level. But I need to make my assumptions directly.

I completed Lakoff's summary and then addressed those assumptions in the final conversation.

George Lakoff

Lakoff (1993) attributed his discovery of the metaphoric structure system in language to Michael Reddy's (1993) understanding of the conduit metaphor. As I described in the preface of this work, Reddy was the first to describe in research that a metaphor, the conduit metaphor, structured our assumptions about communication. The conduit metaphor created the incorrect inference that thoughts were transmitted like objects through a conduit from one person to another. Reddy's analysis of the conduit metaphor opened the door for Lakoff's research on the vast system of metaphors shaping linguistic understanding.

I consider Lakoff's theory to be the muscles and tendons overlaying Korzybski's skeleton of language structure. Korzybski's (1933) structural differential elaborates the selection process connecting a direct physical experience to understanding of that experience based on layers of language concepts. Lakoff also studied the levels of inference and found a metaphoric language/thought system grounded in our physical everyday human experience and shaped by cultural belief systems.

Lakoff argued that metaphors structure our conceptual system and shape our understanding of the world. Like Korzybski, he used the term "map" to describe a person's interpretation of the internal and external experience. In referring to the metaphoric system, Lakoff (1993) used mapping to describe the "fixed pattern of conceptual correspondence across conceptual domains" (p. 210). A metaphor mapped the qualities of a source domain to a target domain. And, those mappings were at a superordinate level not the basic level. For example, "in the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY mapping, a love relationship corresponds to a vehicle. A vehicle is a superordinate category that includes such basic level categories as car, train, boat, or plane" (p. 211). Statements like 'Our relationship has hit a *dead-end street'* or 'Look *how far we've come'* were ordinary English expressions about love relationships and shared the principles and patterns of inference found in the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor.

However, not all qualities of a source domain could be mapped to the target domain. The qualities of the target domain dictated whether the source domain quality could be mapped. Therefore, computer generated metaphor models with algorithmic mappings from source to target domain were found to be ineffective. Metaphoric mapping was not a one-to-one correspondence for all qualities.

The important points about Lakoff's metaphoric system included: (a) he identified levels of metaphoric concepts that created a network influencing perception, (b) he described the function of metaphors—revealing some qualities while hiding others, and (c) he explained how new metaphors were used to extend understanding. His

research held the key to understanding how the metaphor, artistic voice, could help us increase awareness of human perception and creativity.

The system Lakoff described included orientational or spatial metaphors; such as *up-down, forward-backward (*rational *is up,* emotional *is down*)*;* ontological metaphors or entities and substances; such as *inflation* as an entity (*Inflation is lowering* our standard of living); and structural metaphors with elaborating qualities; such as RATIONAL ARGUMENT IS WAR with features like *intimidation* (…because I'm bigger than you) or *authority* (…because I'm the boss). His system, like Korzybski's system, contradicted the objectivist claim of identity—external objects existed in reality separate from our human interpretation. It also rejected the subjectivist claim that meaning is private—"What something means to one individual can never be fully known or communicated to anyone else" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Lakoff challenged the definition methods used by objectivist linguists, creating physical or conceptual objects with sets of inherent properties, like a GUN with the properties of shape, weight, parts. Instead, he proposed that understanding the concept of GUN involved interactional properties or "a multidimensional gestalt of properties where the dimensions are PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR ACTIVITY, PURPOSIVE, FUNCTIONAL, etc." (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 121). He demonstrated how interactional properties defined the concept of gun by comparing a BLACK GUN with a FAKE GUN. According to the objectivist view, a black gun was a gun while a fake gun was not but it did not define what a fake gun was. In Lakoff's analysis, a fake gun preserved the perceptual (looks like a gun), motor-activity (handles like a gun), and purposive (serves some of the purpose of a gun) properties of a real gun. However, it negated the properties of function

(it doesn't shoot) and history (it was not made to be real). He recognized the perceptual, motor-activity, and purposive properties were not inherent in guns but involved how people interacted with guns.

> This indicates that the concept GUN, as people actually understand it, is at least partly defined by interactional properties having to do with perception, motor activity, purpose, function, etc. Thus we find that our concepts of objects, like our concepts of events and activities, are characterizable as multidimensional gestalts whose dimensions emerge naturally from our experience in the world (pp. 121-122).

Lakoff (1980) demonstrated how new metaphors introduced new understanding. Instead of LOVE IS A JOURNEY, he proposed a metaphor, LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART. He listed a group of entailments for the new metaphor that included other metaphoric as well as literal statements. The list included:

> Love is work.
> Love is active.
> Love requires cooperation.
> Love requires dedication.
> Love involves shared responsibility.
> Love is an aesthetic experience.
> Love involves creativity.
> Love cannot be achieved by formula.
> Love creates a reality. Etc. (p. 140)

Comparing the two metaphors, Lakoff discussed how a network of entailments, when they fit a person's experience, formed a coherent whole. "What we experience with such a metaphor is a kind of reverberation down through the network of entailments that awakens and connects our memories of our past love experiences and serves as a possible guide for future ones" (p. 140).

Lakoff clarified what he meant by reverberations. First, the metaphor highlighted some features while disguising others, like the active versus passive aspects of love. Second, the metaphor entailed specific aspects of concepts, such as with work. Not all

work fit the entailment, only work that required special balance and control for artistic creation. Third, as a metaphor created new meaning as it fit an individual's experience, it could acquire the status of truth. Fourth, "metaphors can be appropriate because they sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals" (p. 142). And fifth, the meaning a metaphor had was partly culturally determined and partly tied to past experience. Those differences would create different interpretations for different people. Thus, the metaphor could be inappropriate for some. However, it also had the potential for creating a new reality, a generative metaphor as Schön (1993) described (see Preface for discussion of a generative metaphor).

The important point Lakoff stressed was how metaphors within the conventional system were grounded. By that he meant "we typically conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical—that is we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated. Thus, a value of metaphors was their potential for expanding our awareness. However, a limited understanding of the vast metaphoric system and the function of metaphors in language, especially their potential for masking aspects of reality, created the "blinders" quality discussed under complexity science.

Returning to my voice

I observed my frustrated, critical thoughts and anxious, time-pressured thoughts as I began the above section. I noticed when I focused on the idea of artistic voice as driving my selection of Lakoff's vast research, I could let go of the frustration and anxiety, and regain my interest and passion for the work. The image of a body emerging with a coordinated structure began to get clearer in my mind. I remembered Dewey's (1934) remarks about the artist's ability to clarify and mold a vague idea into form.

I also noticed a greater understanding of his discussion about aesthetic consciousness as the ability to understand the consequences of each action, such as a brush stroke, as it contributed to the whole. I did not feel I was fully there in my sense of aesthetic awareness, but my excitement was building and I anticipated creating the sections on voice and aesthetic consciousness below.

Studies on Voice

At this point, I was ready to begin exploring the metaphor of artistic voice. Complexity science research clarified the nature of living systems and the quality of emergent properties necessary for a better understanding of our human system. Korzybski's work expanded language conceptually from a static, object determined system to a dynamic mapping system linking human experience, language, and thought. Lakoff's elaboration of the metaphoric network detailed the link between language, perception and experience. Rather than "defining" artistic voice as if it were an object separate from context, I chose to explore the various dimensions of the metaphor, voice, and types of voice leading to aesthetic understanding.

Peter Elbow (1994), a literary scholar, and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), feminist psychology researchers, were helpful for that purpose. I want to first present a summary of the Belenky, et al study, demonstrating a human developmental quality of voice and then present Elbows research on resonant voice in text.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule

Feminist theory in psychology held one of the first references to voice within the field of psychology. Carol Gilligan's (1982) research with women expanded existing knowledge on human intellectual and moral development. Her work introduced women's experience into the research conversation. She discovered that women shared a *morality of responsibility and care* that lay beneath their actions and choices and more closely described the developmental paths in their lives. The morality of responsibility required the understanding of context for moral choice, "claiming that the needs of individuals cannot always be deduced from general rules and principles and that moral choice must also be determined inductively from the particular experiences each participant brings to the situation" (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 8). This insight contrasted with the *morality of rights* growth process described in previous studies with men (Piaget, 1965, and Kohlberg, 1981, 1984) that fostered independence and competition. The morality of rights invoked the metaphor of "blind justice" and advocated for objectivity in the resolution of disputes, adherence to universal principles and abstract laws. Prior to her study, psychological research often ignored gender differences and resulted in women's reality often being labeled as abnormal.

The 'voice' metaphor used in the title of her book, *In A Different Voice*, conveyed the importance of studying cultural differences—the women speaking out and being heard expanded the language of meaning for relationships and connection. Value was found in diversity. The book became a classic within feminist psychological studies.

Following Gilligan's (1982) research, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) conducted another developmental study of 135 women. They based their study

design on William Perry's (1970) research with undergraduate students at Harvard where he described:

> how student's conceptions of the nature and origins of knowledge evolve and how their understanding of themselves as knowers changes over time.… While a few women were included in Perry's original study as subjects, only the interviews with men were used in illustrating and validating his model. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 9).

Belenky et al. explored whether women from diverse ethnic and social class backgrounds, from formal educational settings and family service agencies shared the same conceptions about knowledge as the young people from Perry's elite university. They found that, in contrast to Perry's study, the women often used metaphors of voice and silence in their interviews to describe their educational experience rather than the accepted visual metaphor of the objectivity of knowing and mind ("the mind's eye," "blind justice," and "double blind" studies).

The researchers concluded that those metaphors literally and figuratively captured the interrelationship between various psychic systems in the *perspectives* they defined (versus *positions* in Perry's scheme) of intellectual and ethical growth. They built upon Perry's intellectual and ethical developmental framework of including categories of basic dualism, multiplicity, relativism subordinate, and relativism. In contrast, Belenky, et al.'s five categories identified "the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined" (p. 18). They chose to use the term perspective for their stages of growth because their sample included women of such widely different ages, life circumstances, and backgrounds. There was a developmental quality between the perspectives, but it was not assumed that one individual position was a prerequisite for subsequent positions or that the order of development was sequential. As they followed

the women over time, the researchers noticed that as individual participant's perception of the sources of knowledge changed, their self-perceptions changed, and they began to develop a greater sense of their own authority and voice. There was an interactive effect, not a cause/effect relationship.

They chose to group the women's perspectives into five major epistemological categories:

> ***silence*,** a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority; ***received knowledge,*** a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own; ***subjective knowledge,*** a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited; ***procedural knowledge***, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge; and ***constructed knowledge,*** a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing (p. 15).

In the following synopsis of their five perspectives, the researchers analyzed language use as a means for understanding their interviewees internal experiences of connectedness, sense of self, forms of knowing, and their relationship with authority. The interrelationship of those various parts directly influenced the quality of expressiveness.

The perspective of *silence* included only a few women but the authors used the position to anchor the range of variation in perspectives and voice. "These silent women were among the youngest and the most socially, economically, and educationally deprived of all those we interviewed. We met them in the social agencies for parents…" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 23-24).

The common theme in the language of these women was "words were perceived as weapons.… The silent women worried that they would be punished just for using words—any words." (p. 24). In their interviews, there were no images describing voice, no indications of dialogue with "the self," "no words that suggested an awareness of mental acts, consciousness, or introspection" (p. 25). Their ability to learn from words was limited.

Because the women have relatively underdeveloped representational thought, the ways of knowing available to them are limited to the present (not the past or the future); to the actual (not the imaginary and the metaphorical); to the concrete (not the deduced or the induced); to the specific (not the generalized or the contextualized); and to behaviors actually enacted (not values and motives entertained). …[T]hey have no sense of "we-ness" with others. Their difficulties with establishing the most basic connections with others are dramatically illustrated by Bonnie's inability to find meaning in the cries of her baby, an inability that seems similar to the difficulties she experienced in trying to find meaning in the words used by others." (p. 26-27).

The women also were passive and dependent in their relationships with authority figures, had difficulty describing any experience of self, and could not describe any anticipated changes for their future. Though few women in the study held this perspective, several women in the study described their experience in this position retrospectively.

Trauma and deprivation played a role in the lives of many of the women in the study but especially these women. The few women in the silent perspective continued to experience that deprivation inwardly and in their environment. They had no sense of the

self as a source of knowledge and had no language describing what was within, only what was outside of them. There was little language indicating "we-ness" or connection. They were isolated within their communities and had few friends. The isolation contributed to their difficulty finding meaning in the words of others. Authority figures were the sources of knowledge about themselves and all-powerful in their lives.

The women in the *received knowledge* perspective defined the self in relation to social roles. Entering the parent role was often a pivotal event ushering in this position. Their relationships with others were often symbiotic and they had little awareness of how they shaped their perceptions to match the perceptions of other's. Yet it was this finding of similarities and intimacies that provided experiences of "mutuality, equality, and reciprocity that are most helpful in eventually enabling them to disentangle their own voice from the voices of others" (p. 38).

This group of women learned by listening. They thought of words as central to the knowing process. They held a literal and dualistic view of ideas and ideals and had a low tolerance for ambiguity. "Things are right or wrong, true or false, good or bad, black or white" (p. 37). They had no concept of understanding as an evolving process that demanded the exercise of reason. They believed that truth came from authorities and had little confidence in their own ability to speak.

Thus, their sense of self-knowledge was gained from others as well. They tended to organize their sense of self "around social expectations that define concrete social and occupational roles" (p. 50). They worked hard to live up to the images that others held of them and were vulnerable to the judgments of authority figures. It was often a collapse of these roles that led the women to the next perspective.

Approximately half of the women in the study were described as holding the *subjective knowledge* perspective. These women had gained a sense of power in trusting their own experience and intuitive processes. The experience of failed male authority played prominently in their stories. During the early stage of subjective knowing, the women began locating an inner source of strength. But, as they became aware of 'that still small voice,' they had difficulty defining the self. The new energy and openness they found in their awareness of inner resources came with their sense of loss related to self as role. They saw the self as changing but were unsure what form it might take. There was a comparing and contrasting of the self with others—recognition of the importance of "really listening" and "really talking." Belenky et al. (1986) discovered that

> developmentalists in the past…have noted that this kind of shift in orientation toward authority—from external authority, which binds and directs our lives, to an adherence to the authority within us—is one of the central tasks of adolescence. Other psychosocial theorists…cite transcendence of social conventions and pressure as an achievement of the mature or "autonomous" personality. What is remarkable in the stories of our women is that this seeming move toward greater autonomy is not tied to any specific age. (p. 54-55)

The common belief within this group was that strategies for knowing grew out of relationships and the details of life. Their predominant learning mode was inner listening and watching. They often disregarded the authority of others, distrusting "logic, analysis, abstraction and even language itself. They see these methods as alien territory belonging to men." (p. 71). This position remained dualistic, meaning there remained a "conviction that there were right answers" (p. 54), however the position of authority had shifted from external to internal.

They had no public voice, but they were gaining a voice by engaging in self-expression to themselves. They often returned to education after the onset of subjective knowing.

The move to the perspective of *procedural knowledge* had two stages: the first stage involved developing the skills and techniques of procedures that gave them "the voice of reason" (p. 90). The second stage involved expressing their knowledge in one of two forms: "separate knowing" or "connected knowing" (p. 101).

Procedural knowledge was usually found in the women who pursued formal education. There they were provided techniques and methods for constructing answers and evaluating knowledge in the world around them.

In the early stages of this phase, the women perceived themselves as pragmatic problem-solvers attempting to take control of their lives in a planned and deliberate fashion (Belenky et al., 1986). However, their old ways of knowing were being challenged. They were learning to be more objective about others and were developing techniques for generating multiple perspectives. Their thinking was less absolute as they developed a language of reason and forms of systematic analysis. The women learned the language of these methodologies but had difficulty grasping the full meaning of the words.

As they suppressed their subjective or absolutist voices in an attempt to develop their more procedural voice, they seemed uncertain but thoughtful before they spoke. They also learned that benign authorities—tutors and professors—could be helpful in developing that voice of reason. The women learned that evaluations of their use of

methods were not personal criticisms and they moved toward collegial relationships with their formal instructors.

In the second stage of the procedural knowledge perspective, some of the women developed a proficiency at the particular methodology and their ability to develop knowledge. These "separate knowers" bought into the idea that the heart of critical thinking involved using procedures to make meaning and achieve mastery over form. In contrast, the "connected knowers" built upon their subjectivist perspective, integrating the procedural knowledge to develop understanding. Empathy was at the heart of connected knowing. Their assumptions included the idea that truth was personal and grounded in the experience of the other. Their procedures for knowing included entering the frame of the other to discover the different point of view. They used their personal abilities of intimacy, acceptance, and harmony as tools for understanding.

The sense of self varied slightly between the separate knowers and the connected knowers. The women identified as separate knowers sought objectivity and in an attempt to avoid projection, suppressed the self and excluded their feelings. They also carried concerns about hurting others with their arguments. Their tools for reasoning were to be used in an adversarial manner, doubting the other rather than developing empathy. The connected knowing women learned to use the self as an instrument of understanding and talked about their own experience to establish a shared understanding. However, they also maintained a sense of selfishness or self-protectiveness to compensate for their sense that the self was weak.

The impact of trauma in the lives of the women studied was a factor in creating a passive or silent voice. The transition to an active, expressive voice often involved a

transformative experience in the procedural knowledge perspective—a relatively benign authority figure offering the student critical thinking techniques was interpreted by the student as silencing the subjective voice they had come to trust. Resolving that conflict often led to the integration of the subjective and procedural forms of knowing that influenced the connected knowers.

These women in the second stage of procedural knowledge were developing a voice that was specialized within the particular learning systems. The separate knowers had difficulty disagreeing with authorities unless their knowledge was couched in method. The connected knowers were searching for that unique voice but the form rather than content was still central. Both of these groups subordinated their voices to the systems and institutions out of which their thinking and procedures arose.

It was the move into *constructed knowledge* where reason, intuition, and expertise from others were integrated into a unique voice. It "began as an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they had learned from others." (Belenky, et al., p. 134).

This stage included reclamation of the self. The women confronted the fragmentary and contradictory parts of the self and developed a tolerance for internal contradictions and ambiguity. They no longer needed to suppress or deny aspects of the self in order to avoid conflict. Their connections with others improved as their self-acceptance increased.

They maintained a relative position in regard to knowledge, understanding that the knower was an intimate part of the known. They appreciated experts that listened and

understood complexity. They learned to move outside of the frames and systems authorities provided to create their own frame.

Their voices were unique and once they learned "that they could construct and reconstruct frames of reference" (p. 138), they felt a greater sense of responsibility for examining, questioning, and developing those systems. They experienced a passion for knowing.

> We observed a passion for knowing the self in the subjectivists and an excitement over the power of reason among procedural knowers, but we found that the opening of the mind *and* the heart to embrace the *world* was characteristic only of the women of the position of constructed knowledge" (p. 141).

These women were more concerned with the moral or spiritual dimensions of their lives and translating their commitments into action.

The authors' acknowledged that their categories were constructed from their study, were not universal, and were not necessarily limited to women. However, their work prepared an epistemological foundation for my own study of voice. Specifically, their study identified that the strength or quality of voice was interrelated with their ability to synthesize the various forms of knowing based on: methodology (procedural knowing), from their experience (subjective knowing) and observations (objective knowing), and their awareness that knowledge was contextual (constructed knowing). In addition, their interview process introduced the background or contextual factors influencing voice for women.

After exploring experiences of developing personal voice, the next step involved examining voice development through form. Peter Elbow, a literary scholar, advocated for voice, and especially resonant voice, as an indicator of power in written text.

Peter Elbow

Elbow (1994) began his essay by identifying three arguments from other scholars against the use of voice in text: (a) writing composition instructors found the term could be confusing for students and difficult to teach, (b) philosophers and followers of a poststructuralist or deconstructionist perspective objected to the idea of the "real presence" of a person or voice in writing, and (c) "People committed to the social construction of knowledge, of language, and of the self tend to object to the concept of voice because it so often seems to imply a naïve model of the self as unique, single, and unchanging" (p. 1).

Elbow addressed the first objection by clarifying what he meant by voice. He emphasized that voice, as it was used to refer to text, had to be used metaphorically. Building on that premise, he compared similarities and differences in the properties of the literal, physical voice and properties of writing. He then distinguished five different forms of metaphorical voice in text and their similarities to the spoken voice. According to Elbow, the first four forms did not involve the assumption of self. However, resonant voice, the fifth form, required entry into that discussion. After clarifying his definition of resonant voice, he then discussed the aspects of it that create controversy.

Before describing Elbow's logic regarding the issues of self found at the center of that controversy, I want to present the five forms of voice he identified. The first, audible voice, referred to the "illusion as we read that we are *hearing* the words" (p. 6). Elbow made the point that people learn to read by hearing text read to them and then reading it out loud. "As a result, when most people encounter a text—a set of words that just sit

there silently on the page with no intonation, rhythm, accent, and so forth—they automatically *project aurally* some speech sounds onto the text" (p. 7).

Elbow found it more significant that some texts resisted that conditioning since hearing text is automatic. The two main barriers he listed to audible voice were awkward or unidiomatic word choice and cultural conformity to literary conventions. In other words, the closer the written word was to the spoken word, the greater likelihood that audible voice would exist in the text. And he argued that society valued writing as an indicator of literacy and thus worked to keep voice out of writing. Though that convention may not be as true for fiction and poetry, there continued to be domains, he stressed, where removing the individual voice from writing is the norm.

The importance of audibility in text related to the reader's ability to interpret meaning through intonation. Just as intonation in speech provided information about the speaker's message, audible voice impacted the reader's ability to interpret the text. Thus, Elbow found it to be an important aspect for writing instruction.

The second type of voice that Elbow elaborated was dramatic voice. The premise of dramatic voice built upon the idea that people were identified by their spoken or literal voices. The hearer interpreted qualities in a voice such as confidence and character. Elbow (1994) also reiterated the New Critics position: "that there is always an implied author or dramatic voice in *any* written text" (p. 11). He stated that the New Critics introduced dramatic voice in order to "heighten the distinction between the character implied by the text and the actual writer" (p. 11).

Elbow then compared two authors' works to intensify the distinction between audible voice and dramatic voice. While audible voice rose or fell based on idiomatic

word choices, dramatic voice was crafted—a construction created by the structure of the text that conveyed a sense of the implied author within a text.

The third form, recognizable or distinctive voice, was synonymous with *style* or signature. Elbow explained that distinctive style could be found in the way one walked or brushed one's teeth, any action that was developed after years of practice. No matter how distinctive the style might be, it was only a representation of the person, not the true self. In fact, Elbow listed authors, such as Yeats and Brahms, who mastered the ability to use a variety of voices. "Recognizable or distinctive voice is not about 'real identity.' We may *recognize* someone from their handwriting or their walk, but those behaviors are not necessarily pictures of what they are like" (p. 14).

He saw the terms recognizable or distinctive as useful when evaluating whether an author's work was characteristic of their usual writing style. And he felt that composition teachers could ask their students whether they were noticing a distinctive style as they developed fluency in their writing. He said he discouraged his own students from lusting after a distinctive voice because it could lead to pretension.

Voice with authority was Elbow's fourth distinct form of voice. He stated that "[a]s readers we often have no trouble agreeing about whether a text shows a writer having or taking the authority to speak out: whether the writer displays the conviction or the self-trust or gumption to make her voice heard" (p. 15). Again, Elbow emphasized that voice with authority did not "entail any theory of identity or self, nor does it require making any inferences about the actual writer from the words on the page" (p. 15). It traditionally meant having the authority to speak or wield influence.

His key argument for separating self out of a discussion about voice with authority was that authority could be practiced or developed by role-playing another invented self. Elbow emphasized that a variety of textual qualities existed that could generate authority. And, authority could be loud or quiet, but most often it appeared to "emanate from a centered calm" (p. 16). He described Virginia Woolf's writing on voice as authority: "We may write elegantly and successfully, she implies, but if we don't write with authority, with a mind of our own that is willing to offend, what we produce scarcely counts as real writing (*the heart is plucked out of it)*" (p. 16).

Elbow (1994) emphasized the fifth form, resonant voice or presence, as the most controversial but also the most powerful. The debate involved whether the term inferred a sense of self. Elbow argued that it did not assume any particular model of the self nor did it require a model of self as "simple, single, unique, or unchanging" (p. 17).

> Once we see that resonance comes from getting more of ourselves behind the words, we realize that unity or singleness is not the goal. Of course we don't have simple, neatly coherent or unchanging selves. To remember the role of unconscious is to remember what Bakhtin and social constructionists and others say in different terms: we are made of different roles, voices. Indeed, Barbara Johnson sees a link between voice and *splitness* or *doubleness* itself—words which render multiplicity of self: 'The sign of an authentic voice is thus not self-identity but self-difference' (p. 19).

Elbow clarified that resonant voice was not synonymous with cohesive self if coherence meant singleness of self. However, he left room for coherence if its meaning represented transparency or congruence with self in its many forms.

He contrasted resonant voice with sincere voice to make his point. He first described the common understanding of sincere voice as belief in what the speaker says. The experience of trust was connected with sincerity. He emphasized that we are trained to listen for distinctions between the person's utterance and their intention.

> In short, sincerity tells us about the fit between intention and conscious thought and feeling. But only that; only about what the relation between what people intend to say and what they are consciously thinking and feeling. What about gaps between utterance and *unconscious* intentions and feelings? (p. 17)

In contrast, Elbow used resonant voice to point to the "relationship between discourse and the unconscious. When we hear sincerity that is obviously tinny, we are hearing a *gap* between utterance and unconscious intention or feeling. Self-deception" (p. 17-18).

But resonant voice, he contended, represented those rare moments when a person captured in language the full richness of unconscious and conscious experience. "It is words of this sort that we experience as resonant—and through them we have a sense of presence with the writer" (p. 18). Elbow discovered that the presence of resonant voice in text could often be found at a point where the writing broke down:

> When I notice bits of resonance in others' writing—or when others notice it in mine—it is often a cue that the piece is going to have to get worse before it gets better—be reshaped or restanced or revoiced in some way—or at least before it can realize the potential resonance that is trying to get in (p. 20).

According to Elbow (1994), resonant voice could be heard through irony, fiction, lying, and games, forms of complex discourse.

> If we value the sound of resonance—the sound of more of a person behind the words—and if we get pleasure from a sense of the writer's presence in a text, we are often going to be drawn to what is ambivalent and complex and ironic, not just to earnest attempts to tell the sincere truth.… The most resonant language is often lying and gamey. Writing with resonant voice needn't be unified or coherent; it can be ironic, unaware, disjointed (p. 18).

Elbow made the important point that resonance appeared most often when the author functioned

> 'as artist': that is, we tend to get more of our unconscious into our discourse when we use metaphors and tell stories and exploit the sounds and rhythms of language.… The concept of resonant voice explains the intriguing power of so

> much speech and writing by children: they wear their unconscious more on their sleeve; their defenses are often less elaborate. Thus they often get more of themselves into or behind their discourse (p. 19).

Elbow expanded on his notion of self, arguing against the aspects of self as simple, coherent or unchanging. The model of self he advocated was a self that evolved, changed, fell into chaos, took on new voices and assimilated them. Thus the idea of getting more of oneself behind the words correlated with how resonance in the physical voice resulted when more of the body's resources were behind it; resources such as movement, facial expression, and stance that revealed "our dividedness, complexity, and splitness." (p. 20)

And rather than pointing to particular textual features (or particular body movements in physical resonance), to identify resonant voice, Elbow stated that it could be found in "the *relationship* of textual features to an inferred person present behind the text" (p. 21). The resonance of the sentence or paragraph depended on "the context of the larger work" (p. 21). And that larger work entailed more than one example of an author's work.

Elbow made the point that resonant voice, as a concept was harder to convey than the other forms of voice. The subtlety of resonant voice in text could be heard among audibility, dramatic voice, authority, or distinctive voice but not necessarily vice versus.

Once the categories were established, Elbow then addressed the problems of ideology and the politics of 'the self;' namely "that we can make inferences about the fit between the voice in a text and the actual unknown, unseen historical writer behind the text—on the basis of the written text alone" (p. 22).

His key argument was related to issues of trust and character or ethos. He stated that at an early age, humans learned to distinguish sincerity from insincerity or trustworthiness, within the relationship between the person and the spoken voice. He did not elaborate on the possible visual cues that might inform that decision, but he did make the point that the decision could be made on sound alone such as during a telephone conversation.

He made an important point related to the skill of distinguishing trustworthiness. It was a natural survival skill and people automatically applied it to writing as well as speaking. He felt that education and our culture of literacy, unfortunately taught students to ignore that natural ability and rely instead on words in texts. They were taught to identify "meaning and logic of words themselves and to stop relying on extratextual cues such as how impressive or authoritative the author is or how you feel about her" (p. 24).

Elbow also referred to Aristotle's teachings on persuasion to introduce the issue of power or ethos in resonant voice as it contrasted with dramatic voice. According to Elbow, Aristotle stated that people believed those of good character more than others. And, Aristotle described the skills of dramatic voice or rhetoric that gave the orator the appearance of genuineness even if their true moral character fell short. Thus Elbow concluded that Aristotle described that gap between "the implied author and the real author, between dramatic voice and the writer's own voice" (p. 26) and how to hide it.

But Elbow's main purpose for invoking Aristotle's teachings was to highlight the common ability to listen for that gap and to trust the speaker or writer when there was no gap.

> Since readers and listeners make these perceptions all the time about the trustworthiness of the speaker or writer on the basis of their words alone, any

> valid rhetorical theory must show that persuasiveness often comes *from resonant voice* or *communicated presence* as often as it comes from merely dramatic voice or implied author. Aristotle clearly implies what common sense tells us: we are not persuaded by implied author as such—that is, by the creation of a dramatic voice that sounds trustworthy; we are only persuaded if we believe that dramatic voice is the voice of the actual speaker or author.… If *ethos* is nothing *but* implied author, it loses all power of persuasion (p. 26).

Elbow then made the important distinction that the issue of self was not important for the reader but was for the writer. The reader always had a choice about hearing voice in its many forms. Readers "have access only to the text, not to the writer; but as writers we have access both to the text and to ourselves" (p. 27). From that premise, Elbow worked to confront the theoretical arguments about the essential versus the dialogical nature of the self and invoked the importance of taking a pragmatic stance—that each person intuitively knows when their voice sounds like them or not. He acknowledged the variety of forms or voices within each person and encouraged the exploration of the range of inner voices in ones writing.

The important conclusion that Elbow drew was the value of hearing the various forms of voice and acknowledging that each added to the richness of voice.

Returning to my voice

I felt as though building the background for artistic voice was a long, labored process. Precision may have obstructed the view, too much detail. And yet, sitting with the final amassed version of information, I needed to return to the beginning. Dewey's work set the stage for the journey to artistic voice. It was important to build up a body of knowledge describing qualities of the human body, humanness, and humanity. But the purpose or objective for presenting those descriptions was to flesh out and support a

different form of perception—aesthetic consciousness—and how it infused and shaped expression or form.

Following is a summary of Dewey's (1934) philosophical work, *Art As Experience*. His writing reconnected the levels of human experience, meaning-making, and interaction with form.

Dewey's Aesthetic Framework

Dewey's (1934) book, *Art As Experience,* reflected his point of view, grounding lived experience in interaction with the environment, whether it be the work of science, art, or religion. In addition, he set as his goal re-unifying or reconnecting context with what, in science and philosophy traditions before him, was analyzed and isolated as "essential." Thus, when he turned his method of inquiry on art, his conclusions reflected those ideals.

Dewey believed humans and their environment were inherently connected, but that elements of civilization had created an artificial distance, the illusion of separateness from each other and the environment. Thus, his theory of aesthetics reflected the idea of conscious participation in and re-union with the environment.

Unity of experience

An experience, in Dewey's theory, was a whole unit that became the "germ of art." Like a seed, that unit contained the elements necessary for a growing life—separation, suffering, struggle and tension, overcoming of obstacles to re-union, meaning-making, and harmonized reconnection. The role of conflict and struggle was to move an experience forward. Transformation of suffering led to the organism's growth or

expansion. With meaning came the connection of the original separating act with the consequence of that experience. Painful emotions played a role in breaking apart the old mental framework and re-cementing the new structure. Care and concern for objects and issues led to the intensity of emotion.

But, this cycle was only the "undergoing" phase of the creative act. The "doing" phase also contained a transformation—organizing the various parts of the undergoing phase and converting that vision into art. Form and content were the two elements of the doing phase. There was no limitation on the material used in art and Dewey argued against the idea of reifying form. For example, he noted that a study of singers' voices indicated that the students, more often than accomplished artists, produced sounds that coincided with exact pitch. The accomplished artists took liberties with music. They understood that variation contained energy and interest as well as served their purpose of "cumulative progression toward fulfillment" (Dewey, 1934, p. 164). Content was only separate from form in theory. It was through form that the content of meaningful experience was expressed; the merging of old experience with new form was to infuse it with new life.

In Dewey's framework, artistic perception was the joining of the surrender and receptivity of undergoing with the purposeful action of doing. Understanding the consequences of each brush stroke and its place within the overall painting was his idea of the highest form of intelligence. Excessive doing or excessive undergoing limited perception and resulted in superficial or false meaning. But increased reflection could correct excessive doing just as increased action could shift excessive undergoing.

Heightened perception enhanced the value and significance of each act. The artist pursued development of this perception and aesthetic ability, but it was possible for and part of the lived experience of all individuals. According to Dewey (1934), it was the character of the creative mind to "seize any material that stirs it so that the value of that material may be pressed out and become the matter of a new experience" (p. 189). Dewey recognized in creative individuals the vibrancy and willingness to pursue exploring the unknown and making it known.

The self in aesthetic experience

Dewey (1934) rejected the theories of psychology of his period regarding the relationship between the artist and the work of art or the role of aesthetic experience in the life of the artist in the expressive act. He described projection as a misconception for it located the act wholly within the mind of the individual. Any concept that separated out the individual from the expressive act failed to capture the unity of the experience. He stated that projection might take place in the mind prior to the act of expression, but not during.

> Ordinary experience is often infected with apathy, lassitude and stereotype. We get neither the impact of quality through sense nor the meaning of things through thought. The "world" is too much with us as burden or distraction. We are not sufficiently alive to feel the tang of sense nor yet to be moved by thought. We are oppressed by our surrounds or are callous to them. Acceptance of this sort of experience as normal is the chief cause of acceptance of the idea that *art cancels separations that inhere in the structure of ordinary experience* [italics added]. Were it not for the oppressions and monotonies of daily experience, the realm of dream and reverie would not be attractive. No complete and enduring suppression of emotion is possible. Repelled by the dreariness and indifference of things which a badly adjusted environment forces upon us, emotion withdraws and feeds upon things of fantasy. These things are built up by an impulsive energy that cannot find outlet in the usual occupations of existence. It may well be that under such circumstances that multitudes have recourse to music, theater,

> and the novel to find easy entrance into a kingdom of free floating emotions. But this fact is no ground for the assertion by philosophic theory of an inherent psychological separation of sense and reason, desire and perception (p. 260).

He placed cause of the maladies of society as the separation from the environment. To him, mind, soul, spirit, and body were not separate either. Each had a role, but no one part was dominant. Rather each part was connected with objects and events, past, present, and future. The "stream of consciousness" that united undergoing and doing placed the artist as a bearer of an organic impulsion rather than the cause of it—reconnecting the individual and environment. Perception was the guiding force of that energy. Senses were the organs of perception.

Dewey brought 'sense' to the fore in aesthetic consciousness. Philosophy and psychology discounted the role of sense in the study of human experience. But Dewey felt the senses were the organs directly connecting the person and environment. Qualities of the world were realized through the senses. Mind and sense interactions created meaning and values from experiences; extracting what was significant for future service. What made aesthetic consciousness possible was the unity of "sense and impulse, of brain and eye and ear, …saturating it with the conscious meanings derived from communication and deliberate expression" (Dewey, 1934, p. 23). And that unity elevated the human senses above those of the animal.

> Many impulses of which we are not distinctively aware give body and breadth to the conscious focus. Even more important is the fact that primitive need is the source of attachment to object. Perception is born when solicitude for objects and their qualities brings the organic demand for attachment to consciousness.… Perception that occurs for its own sake is full realization of all the elements of our psychological being.
>
> Here, of course, is the explanation of the balance, the composure, that is characteristic of much esthetic appreciation. As long as light stimulates only the eye, experience of it is thin and poor. When the tendency to turn the eyes and head is absorbed into a multitude of other impulses and it and they become the

> members of a single act, all impulses are held in a state of equilibrium. Perception instead of some specialized reaction then occurs, and what is perceived is charged with value.
>
> This state *may* be described as one of contemplation. [Equilibrium] signifies…only that different impulsions mutually excite and reinforce one another so as to exclude the kind of overt action that leads away from emotionalized perception. Psychologically, deep-seated needs cannot be stirred to find fulfillment in perception without an emotion and affection that, in the end, constitute the unity of the experience" (pp. 256-257).

Perception fed aesthetic consciousness. Consciousness was more than mind. To Dewey (1934), mind was the background and consciousness the foreground. "Mind forms the background upon which every new contact with surroundings is projected; …in the projection of the new upon it, there is assimilation and reconstruction of both background and of what is taken in and digested" (p. 264). Mind changed slowly but consciousness was always in rapid change as it adjusted to the environment. "[Consciousness] marks the place where the formed disposition and the immediate situation touch and interact. It is the continuous readjustment of self and the world in experience" (p. 266). According to Dewey (1934) intuition also played a role in aesthetic consciousness.

> "Intuition" is that meeting of the old and new in which the readjustment involved in every form of consciousness is effected suddenly by means of a quick and unexpected harmony which in its bright abruptness is like a flash of revelation; although in fact it is prepared for by long and slow incubation.… The background of organized meanings can alone convert the new situation from the obscure into the clear and luminous. When old and new jump together, like sparks when the poles are adjusted, there is intuition (p. 266).

Intuition, interest, inspiration, and imagination were the key elements connecting mind and aesthetic consciousness in the expressive act. Interest drove selection and assemblage of materials creating the individuality of a product versus mechanized uniformity. The fertile ground of rich and developed interest fed inspiration.

Imagination held the main role in novelty and emphasized the adventurousness of the meeting of mind and universe. According to Dewey (1934), imagination

> designates a quality that animates and pervades all processes of making and observation. It is a *way* of seeing and feeling things as they compose an integral whole.… When old and familiar things are made new in experience, there is imagination" (p. 267).

Imagination was also the link between the individual's inner and outer vision. He described the dissidence the individual undergoes attempting to conform the outer to the inner. The individual experienced humility as he struggled and submitted to the discipline of the outer vision. Manifestation of the idea was restricted and shaped by form. Openness to imagination led to creation of the new.

Ways of knowing

Unity was Dewey's theme song. In his theory of inquiry, art and science shared a role in understanding. Dewey distinguished four phases of the scientific process of inquiry:

> It begins with the problematic situation, a situation where instinctive or habitual responses of the human organism to the environment are inadequate for the continuation of ongoing activity of the fulfillment of needs and desires.… The second phase involves the isolation of the data or subject matter which defines the parameters within which the reconstruction of the initiating situation must be addressed. In the third, reflective phase of the process, the cognitive elements of inquiry (ideas, suppositions, theories, etc.) are entertained as hypothetical solutions to the originating impediment of the problematic situation, the implications of which are pursued in the abstract. The final test of adequacy of these solutions came with their employment in action. If a reconstruction of the antecedent situation conducive to fluid activity is achieved, then the solution no longer retains the character of the hypothetical that marks cognitive thought; rather, it becomes a part of the existential circumstances of human life (Field, 2001, p. 4).

His admiration of the epistemological method did not blind him to errors made by scientists—reifying the reflective phase producing ideas and theories. He identified

scientists as focused on analysis in the problem-solving phase and the artist as focused on the phase where solutions were tested and meanings were realized through action, synthesis (Dewey, 1934). Yet, he acknowledged that scientists could be artistic in their creation of knowledge and artists used problem-solving methods in their work.

For Dewey, science was the handmaiden of art. The process of inquiry was only a tool for meaningful understanding of a deeper experience. Human beings had inherent qualities for understanding described under *Self in aesthetic experience* above. Dewey believed those qualities united the undergoing and doing phases of the creative process for shaping art from experience, either by the artist or the perceiver.

For both artist and perceiver, the undergoing or reflective phase began with what he called a total seizure of both mind and emotions, "an inclusive qualitative whole not yet articulated, not distinguished into members" (Dewey, 1934, p. 191). Ideas emerged from that unique unformed "musical mood of mind" (p. 192). With perception came discrimination of parts. Attention to the background led to emergence of members of the whole.

> And if attention moves in a unified direction instead of wandering, it is controlled by the pervading qualitative unity; attention is controlled *by* it because it operated within it.… If the percipient is aware of seams and mechanical junctions in a work of art it is because the substance is not controlled by a permeating quality. (p. 192)

The quality that Dewey described was a felt quality without words and could only be directly experienced. Emotional intuition was the ability to comprehend the unformed whole. The essence of the whole pervaded every member or part. Without that penetrating quality, parts were only mechanically related. The intuited whole was the spirit and life of the work.

The lived experience of the artist was the background for the whole. That experience also belonged to the unbounded space of all life. The recognition of the universal within the individual work, the vague unknown, could only be intuited and formed by direct sense and emotional experience.

The creative or doing phase, for the artist, required that he adopt the attitude of his audience, to place himself in the position of the receiver as he created. In addition, he must care deeply for the issue or concern merging with form. This act of attunement to audience and object contained, for Dewey, the element of love or care—another form of knowing closely related to sensing.

The act of forming a medium with meaning required skill. Background experience, interest, and intuition also played a role in the selection of materials and content. The vague whole infused and clarified the qualities and rhythms of form. The artist's ability to surrender to that process often led to a mystical sense of the experience. But Dewey emphasized it was only mystical because it was beyond intellect, part of direct experience.

Rhythm

Dewey's concept of rhythm was the pattern that arose out of the flux of change. Flux was the term he used for looseness. Interactions that led to stability and order were shaped as the organism moved out of the disturbance toward stability. The power and intensity of the rhythms could be measured by the amount of energy expended toward overcoming obstacles. The constant breaking down, expanding, and rebuilding of these structures led to expanded life, aesthetic experience.

The non-aesthetic could be found at both ends of the continuum—where life was experienced as in flux or at the other extreme of stability and rest (no being). The aesthetic, the most intense state of being, was experienced in the transition from disturbance to harmony. Out of this transition, order arose. "Order was made out of relations of harmonious interactions that energies bear to one another" (Dewey, 1934, p. 14). Dewey believed that it was part of the nature of living organisms to seek out and incorporate this order into themselves.

Rhythms in nature were the conditions of form in experience and thus of expression. "Esthetic rhythm is a matter of perception and therefore includes whatever is contributed by the self in the active process of perceiving" (Dewey, 1934, p. 163). But Dewey was specific about what he considered the qualities of aesthetic rhythm.

> Esthetic recurrence is that of *relationships* that sum up and carry forward. Recurring units as such call attention to themselves as isolated parts, and thus away from the whole. Hence they lessen esthetic effect. Recurring *relationships* serve to define and delimit parts, giving them individuality of their own. But they also connect; the individual entities they mark off demand, *because* of the relations, association and interaction with other individuals. Thus the parts vitally serve in the construction of an expanded whole (p. 166).

The lines, colors, shades, or spaces reinforced one another with variations leading to a complex experience. Distortions in art served to reveal values often concealed in ordinary experience and stimulate perception to an aesthetic awareness. He felt habituation dulled the senses to these natural rhythms.

Dewey(1934) attempted to answer the question of how a work of art gives the appearance of coming to life.

> The living being is characterized by having a past and a present; having them as possessions of the present, not just externally. And I suggest that it is precisely when we get from an art product the feeling of dealing with a *career*, a history, perceived at a particular point of its development, that we have the impression of

> life. That which is dead does not extend into the past nor arouse any interest in what is to come (p. 176).

Thus he believed that aesthetic expression involved the organization of energies toward fulfillment of an experience, not just the end of it. The movement forward involved the perception of rhythm patiently building an experience and completing the whole.

Form resulted. According to Dewey, form "as it is present in the fine arts, is the art of making clear what is involved in the organization of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing life-experience" (p. 24).

The expressive act

The unit of complete experience, for Dewey, began with an impulsion. Dewey (1934) distinguished an impulse from an impulsion; an impulse was a specialized part of the creature needed for adaptation versus an impulsion that involved the whole being.

> 'Impulsion' designates a movement outward and forward of the whole organism to which special impulses are auxiliary. It is the craving of the living creature for food as distinct from the reactions of tongue and lips that are involved in swallowing; the turning toward light of the body as a whole, like the heliotropism of plants, as distinct from the following of a particular light by the eyes. Because it is the movement of the organism in its entirety, impulsion is the initial stage of any complete experience. (p. 58).

Dewey clarified that the impulsion arose from a need experienced by the whole organism and could only be satisfied by initiating relations with the environment. To him, the need was recognition of the organism's dependence for wholeness on the environment. This need began an adventure of an experience.

Within that adventure, the organism could expect to encounter resistance to satisfaction of the need, resulting emotions, and a continued pressing drive for

satisfaction. These factors were critical to an expression of emotion. But it took materials acting as a media for the emotions to then be formed into art. Turmoil, the stirring of emotion, was another essential element to artistic expression. At the meeting place of organism and environment, with resistance and pressing forth, turmoil became the ferment, the wanting and valuing of something important.

The clarification process—the ordering of strong emotions with the values and meanings of prior experience—led to transformation of the inspiration into a refined and formed product. "[O]ur appetites know themselves when they are reflected in the mirror of art, and as they know themselves they are transfigured. Emotion that is distinctly esthetic then occurs" (Dewey, 1934, p. 77).

Though Dewey reminded us that everyone was capable of creating an aesthetic experience, what kept most people from becoming artists was the "capacity to work a vague idea and emotion over into terms of some definite medium" (p. 75). The emotions played a key role in his model. The emotions kept the organism focused, attracted "like" materials from an array of diverse locations, and condensed the abstract inspiration into the epitome of the values associated with it. "This function creates the 'universality' of a work of art' (p. 67). But, it was only emotion that was sent on the mission of finding, gathering, and ordering materials—not emotions that were directly expended—that provided the aesthetic quality to art.

According to Dewey (1934), the artist had a distinct advantage over an expert psychologist in dealing with emotion. "For the former build up a concrete situation and permit *it* to evoke emotional response. Instead of a description in intellectual and symbolic terms, the artist 'does the deed that breeds' the emotion" (p. 67).

Final Conversation—Toward a Model of Artistic Voice

The rainforest in all its intricate, balanced working would be impossible to detail and articulate. So, too, will artistic voice be incompletely described, for language will always fall short of unique experience. As I reread my summary of Dewey's aesthetic model, written four years ago, I held a different understanding of its meaning today. Yet, I was struck by the accuracy of the description to my own current perception. The original interpretation flowed from months of reading and rereading Dewey's book, allowing comprehension to form into a simplified conceptual framework. I intuitively knew it was the heart of artistic voice. But the body's wisdom, the skeleton, muscles, and mind, was needed to execute the knowing of the heart. Thus, the other authors' research added depth and dimension to my understanding.

This chapter contained a small portion of the body needed to create a framework or structure for artistic voice. Following is a list of the assumptions I hold, based on the material in this chapter:

1. Living systems, according to complexity theorists, are of nonlinear design, dissipative structures, and interconnected part-to-whole processes. That means that (a) feedback loops are necessary for creating cognitive circuitry for learning, (b) bifurcation (or crisis) points hold potential for transition to a higher organized state, (c) surprise outcomes are a result of multiplicity of options available at the transition point, (d) the decision path chosen at the point of transition depends on the systems history and current moment conditions, (e) the process cannot be reversed, (f) living systems structurally couple to their environment and behavior results from an interaction between

the two, (g) language in its many forms shapes perception and self-awareness in human systems, and (h) higher ordered states are emergent properties of part-to-whole relationships.

2. The English language is based on Aristotelian principles and many of those principles are outdated based on new mathematical information. Language systems influence neurological structures and thought patterns. It is possible to reshape our language system and perception to better reflect our current understanding of reality. That reality includes our human ability to receive energetic information through the senses and to recognize the value of similarities and connection rather than just separateness and distinctions. The received information is translated through a conceptual system into perception and responses to environmental or internal stimuli. The map is never the territory. The ability to accurately evaluate the response to stimuli leads to increased functioning and expansion of complex maps.

3. Our every day language system is a network of metaphoric connections. Metaphors are useful for revealing similarities. Yet, it must be remembered that they also hold potential for hiding qualities. Generative metaphors are useful for bringing new concepts and solutions to problems into our awareness. And verbal/written language is only one form of language or seeing.

4. Voice is a useful metaphor for expressing meaning through form. Resonant voice reflects a personal experience, deeply felt and skillfully communicated through a medium. Usually a developmental process is involved including

finding one's sense of authority and mastering an expressive language. A sense of authority involves a relationship between relativistic knowing and context—the individual developing a basic trust in his or her ability to map an environmental experience and respond creatively to complex situations. Openness and surrender to expressing depth of feeling increases resonance in text.

5. Aesthetic consciousness involves a balance of undergoing and doing. An experience, defined by Dewey (1934), is the seed for creative expression. The interaction between artist and form involves a direct, in-the-moment engagement between the artist's experience, the idea and a medium. Creative energy, including intuition, interest, inspiration, and imagination, informs the rhythm and selection process for aesthetic qualities.
6. Artistic voice is an emergent property, a process of harmonizing the parts into a new whole.
7. The reality of life is constant change. The state of nature, at the edge of chaos, balances predictable structure with potential for radical change and surprise.

The above assumptions will be examined during the research process and compared with the experience of the artists. However, the unique processes of individual artists are needed to bring the concept to life, to describe the emergence of artistic voice and its variety of experience. I limited this research to exploring their developmental process of voice (ways of knowing and expressing) and examining the points of transition to a

higher organized state, looking for the qualities of the new "whole," or artistic voice, as it emerged.

As I complete this chapter, I feel prepared to listen to their voices from a state of deeper openness and awareness; curious about the spoken as well as the unspoken. I was deeply moved and inspired by their willingness to connect, explore and reveal, through the interviews, their lived experiences. And I hope my interpretation, shaped by their influence on my own growing artistic voice, reflects my heartfelt appreciation of their contribution.

Artistic Voice Defined

Chapter 3

> The artist, clearly, can render only what his tool and his medium are capable of rendering. His technique restricts his freedom of choice…. Sitting in front of his motif, pencil in hand, the artist will, therefore, look out for those aspects which can be rendered in lines…he will tend to see his motif in terms of lines, while, brush in hand, he sees it in terms of masses.
>
> - Ernest Gombrich, *The Essential Gombrich*

Artistic voice can be seen as both an object and a process. Artistic voice is not alone in having a dual structure. An *argument* is another concept or word that is categorized as both an object and a process (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Thus artistic voice has an ontological nature as a bounded entity, a completed expression, and a developmental progression with interactional properties, an emergent state of being. Artistic voice as an object or form in a medium such as a painting or a written document is a reflection of aspects of the artist's experience and interpretation, a point in the phase of the living process. Artistic voice as process involves the person's learning and growth—personal understanding or world-view at different points in time combined with skill development within a craft.

Before going further with defining artistic voice, it would be important to situate the definition process within a context. There are multiple ways to define words. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), our dominant cultural system of definition uses an objective orientation, as discussed in the previous chapter, with Aristotelian laws of identity. The Romantic period challenged that model and presented a subjective framework for understanding. However, creating a subjective model merely reinforces the Aristotelian ideas about identity—objectivity is defined as not subjective and vice

versa. This dichotomy reinforces the split between science and art regarding the nature of truth, the status currently upheld in our culture.

More recent scientific discoveries challenged both frameworks. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) presented an alternative perspective called experientialist. They arrived at their conclusion after discovering the metaphoric nature of our language system. The experientialist perspective resembled pragmatist philosophy, the phenomenological tradition, classical realism, and Continental philosophy. However, the experientialist account of understanding and truth:

> reject[s] the objectivist view that there is absolute and unconditional truth without adopting the subjectivist alternative of truth as obtainable only through the imagination, unconstrained by external circumstances. The reason we have focused so much on metaphor is that it unites reason and imagination. Reason, at the very least, involves categorization, entailment, and inference. Imagination, in one of its many aspects, involves seeing one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing—what we have called metaphorical thought. Metaphor is thus *imaginative rationality*. Since the categories of our everyday thought are largely metaphorical and our everyday reasoning involves metaphorical entailments and inferences, ordinary rationality is therefore imaginative by its very nature….
>
> Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness. These endeavors of the imagination are not devoid of rationality; since they use metaphor, they employ an imaginative rationality.
>
> An experientialist approach also allows us to bridge the gap between the objectivist and subjectivist myths about impartiality and the possibility of being fair and objective. The two choices offered by the myths are absolute objectivity, on the one hand, and purely subjective intuition, on the other. We have seen that truth is relative to understanding, which means that there is no absolute standpoint from which to obtain absolute objective truths about the world. This does not mean that there are no truths; it means only that truth is relative to our conceptual system, which is grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experiences and actions with other people and with our physical and cultural environments (pp. 192-193).

The objective myth and the subjective myth, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) reflect the human need to understand the external and internal environment. However,

both stem from the perspective of humans as separate from their environment. "The experientialist myth takes the perspective of man as part of his environment, not as separate from it. It focuses on constant interaction with the physical environment and with other people" (p. 230). The principles of the experientialist myth extended the concepts of complexity theory into the realm of human understanding. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) described understanding as:

> Within the experientialist myth, understanding emerges from interaction, from constant negotiation with the environment and other people. It emerges in the following way: the nature of our bodies and our physical and cultural environment imposes a structure on our experience, in terms of natural dimensions of the sort we have discussed. Recurrent experience leads to the formation of categories, which are experiential gestalts with those natural dimensions. Such gestalts define coherence in our experience. We understand our experience directly when we see it as being structured coherently in terms of gestalts that have emerged directly from interaction with and in our environment. We understand experience metaphorically when we use a gestalt from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain.
>
> From the experientialist perspective, truth depends on understanding, which emerges from functioning in the world. It is through such understanding that the experientialist alternative meets the objectivist's need for an account of truth. It is through the coherent structuring of experience that the experientialist alternative satisfies the subjectivist's need for personal meaning and significance…. [In addition] the experientialist account of understanding provides a richer perspective on some of the most important areas of experience in our everyday lives: Interpersonal communication and mutual understanding, self-understanding, ritual, aesthetic experience, and politics (p. 230).

The above context structured my definition process. The next step was to identify how the term artistic voice could be understood from an experientialist perspective. How did the physical body and environment structure voice? How would culture shape understanding of voice? How do we categorize and infer meaning in the term, voice? I used dimensions of events suggested by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) to help create an experiential gestalt for the understanding of physical voice or speaking. The information for the dimensions was chosen from Elbow's (1994) comparison of physical voice and

voice in text. I then explored how the modifier, *artistic,* changed the understanding of voice.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) listed natural dimensions within human activities, events, or experiences which included: "*participants, parts, motor activities, perceptions, stages, linear sequences (of parts), causal relations, purpose (goals/plans* for actions and *end states* for events)" (p. 176). Following is my categorization of physical voice in the various dimensions. The metaphor of instrument captures the objective aspects of voice while the concept of expression organizes the interrelationship of the dimensions.

Physical voice as an instrument of expression:

Participants:	Speaker, audience
Perceptual:	Sound is emitted, a noise is made Sound is shaped by inner experience in a particular manner, i.e. style, tone, rhythms
Motor Activity:	Sound is produced by the body, like an instrument played The breath, a shared sign of life, carries the sound
Part/Whole:	Voice is the whole expression, people have unique voiceprints Body parts functioning with breath Tones express emotions, feeling states Semiotic channels carry meaning: volume, pitch, speed, accent, intensity, pauses Semiotic channels have degrees, i.e. degrees of loudness Patterned sequences of channels build other channels, i.e. a tune is a pattern of pitches, rhythm is a pattern of slow and fast and accent Languages are systems of cultural expressions with patterned sequences
Functional:	Instrument of communication

Stages:	Initial conditions: Inner impulse to connect or express Beginning: Starting to move to formulate sound and message Middle: Carrying out emission of sound and message End: Pause
Purposive:	Goal: Express inner state Plan: Organize inner state into coherent form, engage muscle system, emit sound

Artistic voice would be a subcategory of physical voice if the artist were a singer, rhetorician, or actor for example and their training developed a high quality of expression. However, outside the realm of art were many examples of people who loved their work or hobby and expressed themselves artfully through it, such as a person with a natural melodic voice, or an ability to articulate his or her thoughts and emotions in a moving way. Artistic voice was not restricted to a person working in the field of art. But how was artistic voice as metaphor different than artistic voice as a subcategory? We had two examples in the research of voice as metaphor. Elbow (1999) argued that voice in text was a metaphor because there was no sound waves, no breath, or distinguishing qualities of physical sound. The instrument of writing was understood by the metaphor of the instrument of physical voice, though. The dimension of *participants, part/whole, function, stages, and purpose* were found in both speaking and writing. And, Elbow's resonant voice described the level of artistry expressed by the person; more of the writer's self state(s) participated in expression through the instrument.

Belenky et al. (1986) also argued that voice was an appropriate metaphor used by women to describe a developmental perspective or gestalt involving expression of states of self and forms of knowing. However, their study identified the final dimension of voice as voice with authority and did not explore any dimension beyond it. I explore artistic voice as a metaphor for an emergent form of expression, similar to Elbow's

resonant voice in written text, with developmental perspectives similar to Belenky's research. Artistic voice expresses forms of knowing including the language of a person's craft (whether it be gardening or parenting), the ability to create form from their inner ideas and vision, and the expression of wisdom of their personal experience. However, it goes beyond having a sense of authority and includes the vulnerability found in resonant voice, the vulnerability to let go of what one knows to discover what is unknown.

I continue with the assumption that artistic voice is an emergent property of all human beings, just as Dewey (1934) describes aesthetic consciousness as a quality of humanness. With his model in mind, I look for these dimensions as described in Chapter 2 within the concept of artistry: (a) unity of experience, (b) self in aesthetic experience, (c) ways of knowing, (d) rhythm, and (e) the expressive act.

Artistry involves dimensions just as voice involves dimensions. The semiotic channels used by the human voice, such as speed and accent, are also part of languages in other mediums. Additional channels, such as color or lightness and darkness, are also possible based on the medium. The artist understands how to use existing channels and the underlying structures, allowing her to reshape and/or create new channels for meaning, either consciously or unconsciously.

The above concept of artistic voice is a generalization. What will it look like in peoples' lives? How could it inform their modes of expression? In Chapter 4, I compare the artistic development of two men at different stages in their careers, one at the beginning of his transition to independent filmmaking and the other as an accomplished screenwriter. In Chapter 5, I look for transition points in the lives of film artists and the

artistic voice qualities emerging from those turning points. The goal is to understand the unique and similar qualities of each artistic voice.

Experiences of Discovering Artistic Voice

Chapter 4

> It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
> what is essential is invisible to the eye.
> - Antoine De Saint-Exupéry

I needed to clear my head, so I walked in my Austin neighborhood one February afternoon in 2002. Normally I walked in the morning, but this particular day I was overwhelmed with concern about how to implement my dissertation research proposal. I planned to interview film artists, yet the thought of approaching strangers and asking for two hours out of their demanding schedules was already making me anxious. My dissertation committee approved the plan and I was waiting on one final approval from the University. Self-doubt was settling in. Maybe a walk would help ground me back into reality.

Rounding the corner of the neighborhood park, I noticed two semi-trailers parked against the curb near the baseball diamond. Each trailer had five doors in its side and a star painted on each door. Men dressed in t-shirts, jeans, and baseball caps were standing around the area, laughing and joking.

I kept walking, curious, distracted from my anxious rumination, and with a sense of growing anticipation. Deciding to find out if they were part of a movie company, I turned back to the park, summoned up my courage, and asked one of the men what was going on. "We're working on a movie," he said. He was one of the producers and, in addition to discussing the movie, he asked if I would like to interview the director of the film for the study. I could hardly believe my good fortune. Thanking him, I remarked about the coincidence of stumbling upon the movie set just as I was beginning my

research. The man smiled and said, "By the way, the name of our production company is Serendipitous Films."

Dan Millican, the director of *Promises Kept (2003)*, became the first participant in the study. In addition to offering time to answer my questions, he invited me to observe the movie's final week of filming. I witnessed the special effects scene—the villain of the movie shot by a sniper in front of the Austin courthouse—during a drizzly, overcast Saturday morning. I saw actors that I recognized from other movies, (Brian MacNamara, Mimi Rogers, Joey Lauren Adams, Tom Wright, and Sean Patrick Flannery) and watched them entertain the crew between takes. I talked with stage moms and observed them urging their young daughters forward to meet the actors or other "important people" between takes. ("No, I'm not 'somebody,'" I responded when the question was put to me.) I overheard the crew discussing the lead actor's signature pineapple, wondering which scene it was in and whether they had removed it before the scene was filmed. And, I stood by the heaters, talking with the production crew for hours as they waited to break down the set after the final crane shot at 1:00 a.m. on the coldest night of the year.

The culture of that movie set became the backdrop for subsequent interviews. Observing Dan's directing style informed my questions and provided insight into his experience as an artist. He was working on his second independent movie, and he understood the importance of building connections with people and inviting serendipity into his life.

On August 11, 2003, I attended the Austin premiere of *Promises Kept*.

The Threads of Artistic Voice

I started with the assumption that our language, our description of reality, is but a small aspect of human experience. Much of our felt or direct experience goes beyond written or spoken language. As participant Bill Wittliff said, meaning is between the lines in poetry. Much of what actually leads to the experience of artistic voice may remain unknowable, but the visible threads are the stories, the poetry of peoples' lives. I want to examine the known facts or threads along with the gaps between the lines, their direct experience.

This study is an exploration of artistic expression, how ten artists and one researcher held conversations about their journey of finding their artistic voice. One element between the lines was discussed in Chapter 2, a background of historical developments in art and science unconsciously shaping their individual stories. Scientific forms of knowing became the dominant cultural paradigm and created a mechanistic perspective of human experience that infused our social meaning and personal perspectives. But these artists explored a different form of knowing, the aesthetic dimension of human experience with principles of art as a guiding framework for their craft. I presented a different scientific backdrop in Chapters 2 and 3 to examine dynamic, interconnected human systems, metaphorically the role of the individual plant amidst the rain forest or the rain forest amidst the planetary ecosystem. Artistic voice is a boundary that can be drawn around any level of expression in the system setting the stage for exploring meaning, individual perspectives, and personal experiences with an emergent process of artistry and voice.

I first want to provide the background of two participants, Dan Millican and Bill Wittliff. I chose those two to compare and contrast first because Dan was the newest to the field of independent film while Bill Wittliff was the senior member of the participant group, the "godfather of Austin film." (Sublett, 1999). I include a partial list of their accomplishments, information about their earliest memories, and a brief description of their life journey—the 'knowns' or facts. Then I examine the similarities and differences between their conversations, how they wove together the threads of personal choices and their understanding of the role of other unknowable and unforeseen circumstances creating turning points in their lives. I conclude this chapter by examining the role of serendipity. Luck or chance was evident within their stories and I wanted also to include a brief discussion of serendipity after the interpretation of the artists' profiles.

Dan Millican

Dan Millican was the director for the independent films, *Keyman* and *Promises Kept.* In addition to directing these films, Dan wrote the screenplays and much of the music, edited the films, and co-produced them. Dan began his career in independent film in 1999. Prior to that he worked in cable TV and made corporate training videos, one of which won several awards. His production skills were first honed in his role as a stage manager and actor with a Christian theatre, the Cornerstone Theatre in Ft. Worth, while attending college. He passionately worked in the theatre as he completed communications (Radio, TV, and Film) classes at the University of Texas at Arlington. He also had a double minor in drama and English.

Early memories

Dan was surprised that his earliest memories contained so many experiences of illness including: (a) his parents burning his stuffed animals when he suffered scarlet fever at age 3, (b) at age 4 staying with his grandparents when he had the measles and was eating Qwisp Cereal which he thought was fun, and another memory (c) living with his family at a UT apartment complex and playing football with neighborhood kids at age 5. After his interview, I watched his first film, *Keyman*, and was immediately struck by the use of fire as a visual metaphor. Fire burned the opening credits and the hero's guilt was transformed as he died by fire in a burning building. I wondered about the early influence of witnessing his stuffed animals burn.

Dan's life was deeply shaped by his family's religious choices. His parents were involved in a non-traditional Christian ministry—a coffeehouse fellowship called The Well near the UT campus in Austin, Texas, where he grew up. When he was in the 9th grade, his parents had a deep religious experience and moved their family to a property near Dripping Springs. The family lived in a tent for a couple of years while building a home. Dan watched his parents becoming socially isolated and felt they made poor choices due to their religious beliefs. He was the youngest of three siblings, the only boy, and considered himself to be the overly responsible member of his family. Over the years, he formed his own strong religious beliefs in contrast to theirs, what he called creative Christianity. The difference in religious values later formed a rift in their relationship.

Influences on artistry and voice

When asked about the major influences on his artistic journey, he described an experience with his second grade teacher, the creative influence of good friends in high school, and his religious involvement. He said early on, he was often in trouble with his teachers and his first grade teacher told him he was loud. When his own son was later diagnosed with ADD, he guessed that he had ADD as a child, though he was never tested. He said he went into the second grade and tried to whisper. The second grade teacher treated him differently, though, telling him to speak up. She found he was interested in writing and encouraged him. Dan said he learned from those early experiences that he had the power to change. He also described writing as a major creative thread throughout his life beginning from that experience. And, as I witnessed his work with crewmembers, I saw a calm, supportive, ever encouraging ethic in his leadership style, again possibly influenced by his teacher.

He attributed learning how to "think out of the box" to good friends. One high school friend taught him poetry and photography. He said he developed the ability to find interesting visual images in both mediums.

> Poetry I could finish because that was very short. Hanging out with him, I just started writing a lot of poetry, and a lot of it pretty bad, but it was fun. And he would do some things that were way out there creatively…. He would take a look at some of my stuff and he would find something that was interesting in a bad poem and say, "Hey look, I found that very interesting." I remember talking about the city and 'concrete canyons' in one verse and the verse was really bad, the poetry was bad, but I remember him talking about how he liked that I talked about concrete canyons.

He and another friend produced a music video and his friend modeled a sense of experimentation with unusual visual movement. He also had early interests in music and art, playing the violin and saxophone. He taught himself piano in college.

Religious involvement was the dominant thread in Dan's stories and his filmmaking. He described re-dedicating his life as a Christian when he was 15. For him that meant beginning to live his life according to Christian values. Keith Green was a Christian musician and Dan said he was deeply touched by Green's music during the high school years when he was struggling with his parent's separation and their life in Dripping Springs.

Dan's faith was a deep influence in his screenwriting. The idea for his first screenplay, *Keyman*, came from his experience of leaving his three-month-old baby in the car for a few minutes while running an errand and his feelings of remorse and guilt when he returned, realizing he had forgotten him. "When I started breathing again, I thought, 'What would I do if someone had taken him? I would go crazy. But for my faith I'd be a homeless man on the streets.' And so, the whole idea for that first movie came about through that."

The intensity of the feeling from that experience was a driving force for choosing *Keyman* as his first movie. "I was going to die if I didn't make it…. *Keyman* burned in my soul right away. And, I had to make this movie. I was going to go crazy if I didn't make this movie… It's a passion, it overwhelms you." His movie theme explored the ideas of forgiveness and redemption.

His second movie, *Promises Kept*, was also born from personal experiences. He had a client whose 8-year-old daughter was abducted from a Park in Plano, Texas, raped, and murdered. Around the same time, he was playing golf with a businessman whose daughter was kidnapped and held for ransom by an 18-year-old boyfriend and girlfriend. She was found and the couple was caught, but he said his friend continued to feel angry

and believed they were not punished enough. His friend harassed them by letting air out of their tires and calling them at 3 a.m.

Dan remembered strong feelings of support for his friend and empathizing with his desire for revenge but felt it conflicted with his faith. *Promises Kept* reflected that conflict. The movie pitted two child sexual predators against the vigilante that pursued them and explored the theme that "When you do God's job, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,' when you do God's job, even for the most noble of causes, it changes you, and not for the better." He imagined how his feelings as a parent and his "overwrought sense of justice" would drive his behavior much as it drove the behavior of his vigilante character.

> In some ways I haven't reconciled the message, when you do God's job of vengeance, it changes you and not for the better, and my feelings. In my heart right now, you mess with my daughter, I'll take you out. Okay? It changes me for the worse. That's fine. My life has already changed. So, because of that, in the movie the vigilante walks.

Dan considered himself to be a storyteller rather than an artist. He described himself as goal oriented and had a clear sense of direction.

> My secular mission statement is that I feel a social, spiritual, and moral obligation to make our communities better for having watched my art, or my movies, my stories. Better would be defined as…there's a verse in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that says, "And God has written eternity on the hearts of men," and what I feel is called to, not talk to the church, so my movies are not movies that would play for the youth group, but to awaken the fact that we aren't mortal, that our souls continue on and to help awaken that in the hearts of men. So that's what I feel called to do.

Dan used the movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind,* to discriminate what it took to follow a calling versus personal commitment. He said,

> In that movie, many people, millions of people got the message and hundreds of thousands actually made mountains out of their potatoes. Okay, out of the hundreds of thousands maybe thousands actually left their families and left their homes to go on their quest. And out of those thousands, only hundreds actually made it close to the mountain. And, out of those hundreds, most of those were rounded up by the army. Only three broke away from the army and headed up the

> mountain and out of those three, only two made it. That's filmmaking, okay? I've got this impression, this message, this passion and other people do too…and you just start going. And, I was like the character that made it to the top of the mountain. I wasn't going to be denied.

When asked about the difference in commitment level between himself and the others, he reiterated,

> It's more than just commitment because a lot of those people that were rounded up by the army were committed. Okay, sometimes it boils down to what some people call luck. I might call it the hand of God, things that are out of your control. Commitment says that it's just up to you. I believe that God called me to do this. I see tons of evidence in that. Like I go forward with this second movie [*Promises Kept*] even though I don't have the funding all in place. I have a teeny bit. And, I go ahead and start getting the actors together and just start making it happen. And, you know, two days before the deal was going to totally fall apart, boom, all of a sudden I get 90% of the money and I'm fully funded.

Dan described other examples of moments when circumstances came together in his favor, getting the exact lighting for a scene or the smooth running of the filming process.

The sense of feeling called to become a filmmaker involved a process. When he completed college, he first worked as a restaurant manager but was asked to leave from that job. He said his wife supported him in making the decision to pursue a job with a cable TV company. From there, he built his skills and went into video production, developing corporate training videos. This job was his training ground. He used the opportunity to "think outside of the box" creating an award-winning training video that was a *Forest Gump* spoof.

The key decision point for his move into independent filmmaking involved betraying his employers. He wrestled with the ethics involved in the decision. "So the choice was not to go that route [reject opportunity for making his movie] or to go this route [steps toward funding his movie], an important route for making the movie, and be

fired. The amazing part was it took nine months for that to happen." He said he could not talk about the details of the experience because he was contractually bound not to discuss it. However, while working for the training company, he began preparations for his first movie. The decision meant he could not turn back because he would burn bridges—his biggest client wanted him to work for his company but could no longer hire him if he pursued making the movie.

> It's a hard decision to make. I don't think a lot of people have the strength or courage to take the route necessary, because it's going to be hard…. You know, with this last movie, there were three things that I thought about, prayed about. God, give me the strength or the courage to do what I need to do, the strength to be able to do it, and the resourcefulness to run the distance. But strength and courage are… you have to do that. That was one of those moments when it would have been a lot easier to not do it.

I asked Dan how he found courage. He described an incident in high school when he lost an opportunity to play football, a sport he loved, because he made an assumption about his eligibility to play. When he discovered he was eligible, it was too late in the season for him to join the team. It was his only opportunity to play football in school and he said he deeply regretted making that assumption. "I have a huge fear of regret, maybe that's what drives me."

Defining his voice

The final defining characteristic I found in Dan was his choice to pursue what he called conventional, or popular filmmaking. He admired Steven Spielberg and other popular filmmakers. "My favorite movie is *Star Wars* or *Raiders of the Lost Arc*, not *My Dinner With Andre*." In addition to his background in creative arts, he had a deep love of sports. Football and golf were as important as his filmmaking. Thus, he was an

interesting mix of cultural conservative (his words), creative filmmaker, fun-loving athlete and family man with a Christian mission.

When asked about how he saw his own artistic voice, he said he did not feel he had enough material to base a decision yet.

> I don't know what my voice is. Really, you only have one film to look at [*Keyman]*. If you look at that you go…ohhh, his voice is fairly dark, he tends to over-achieve in some areas, but yet, in trying to be big, makes poor creative decisions, to make it appear bigger than it is. The classic over producer syndrome…trying too hard.

He did not elaborate on his experience with his second film, *Promises Kept,* since it was still in production at the time of the interview.

My final question to Dan was why he named his production company Serendipitous Films. He said,

> It's one of mine and my wife's favorite words. We'll go somewhere and find a hole-in-the-wall restaurant, one that nobody knew existed and it's got great food. That's very serendipitous, you know, the knack of finding a pleasant discovery. That's how I define serendipity.

William D. Wittliff

Bill Wittliff's experiences as a screenwriter, producer, and director were extensive. His first screenplay was *Barbarosa (*1982). His more recent and best known works included *The Perfect Storm* (2000), *Legends of the Fall* (1994), and the TV mini-series *Lonesome Dove* (1989). His screenplay, *A Night in Old Mexico* (2008) was under production. His decision to remain in Austin rather than moving to Hollywood earned him the reputation as "Austin icon/godfather of Austin film" (Sublett, 1999).

Early memories

Bill grew up in Grady, Texas. His parents divorced when he was 18-months-old. His mother lived with the stigma of a divorced woman in a small town. She ran the telephone office in their home and Bill described his experience of watching

> the whole world come through our house. That was during World War II. Very few people had telephones in that area, so when somebody was lost in battle or killed in action or whatever, mother would get the call…. It was an opportunity to see life right in front of you, and I mean in all its agonies and all its ecstasies, because sometimes the call was, "Your son's been found and is all right." Other times, "Your son's been killed." And so you'd have weeping and embracing, you'd have laughing and embracing. So those were all the things that are terrific if finally what you want to do is try to lead a creative life and use the stuff of humans to do it.

His parent's divorce influenced Bill's feeling of not belonging in his community and he learned as early as age four or five that storytelling helped him belong. He described his grandfather as a great storyteller. He said the biggest turning point in his life was at the age of twelve. His aunt gave him a book, J. Frank Dobie's *Old Time Tales of Texas*.

> I thought that books and things like that came from across great oceans because my background was all these little towns, a rural background. And it was only when an aunt sent me Dobie's book and in the book was a story I first heard as an oral tradition, then I realized, "My God, books can come out of the very ground I'm standing on." And that was like an explosion for me…. That's the first time, without being able to verbalize it at all, but I had a sense of all of us, meaning the whole world, standing on the same spider web. If it was tweaked over here, you'd feel it everywhere. Now, I wouldn't have pictured it that way, but that was the feeling I had because that book came out of a story that I'd first heard as an oral tradition, which came out of the very ground I was standing on. All of a sudden it was in a book that could go across great oceans, could be translated in different languages. But I had a sense of a tiny, tiny, tiny, little thing out there having a life much larger, could have an influence.

However, he also began reading works by great writers and lost his courage. He said he made the assumption that writing just "poured from God to them and from them

to the paper, and from the paper to the book, and to the world. It was just an assumption of an uneducated little country kid." So he stopped writing when he was an adolescent because he compared himself to those great writers and felt he could never achieve what they had achieved. Much later when he found success, he started the Southwestern Writers Collection at Texas State University to help fledgling writers.

> I know if I had walked into a place like that with all those manuscripts when I was 15, 16, or 17, I would have had the courage to try to be a writer 10 years earlier. I would have seen how everybody, everybody struggles to find just the right word, just the right phrase, to deliver the intention of what they are trying to get across. His fear continued from adolescence through college and into his first career.

He said he majored in journalism at The University of Texas at Austin but wore a sling the first year so no one would know he couldn't type. After he completed college, he married. He and his wife started a publishing company, Encino Press, on $300 he won playing poker. The company was successful but he remembered at about age 28 beginning to feel bored. He endured another year or two feeling trapped by what they had created. "I didn't know how to say, 'Look, I'm not interested in looking at your writing any more. I'm more interested in looking out for mine or to see if I've got anything as a writer.' But if you are a publisher, you spend your time and your efforts on other people's work and careers." Then he reached a turning point.

Influences on artistry and voice

Bill's turning point was also sudden, but involved years of preparation, years of going through doors until he found the courage to connect with a source of ideas inside himself.

One day, just all of a sudden after branding away on this, I realized, "You know, if I didn't want to be in that trap, I could just step out of it because it was a trap I made.

And really, it was such a simple answer. But once I realized it, I just stepped out of it. Then I was working on a photographic book, a visual history of Dallas. I was driving back and forth to Dallas collecting old pictures, and as it happened, the radio wouldn't work in the car. So every time I would drive to Dallas, I would start thinking of this story that my grandfather had told me. I started building on it and because I was driving and not writing, I saw it in images. Well, I made maybe six trips one month, and every time I would get in the car I would pick it up again. By the time I finished driving back and forth to Dallas, I had seen the whole story. So I sat down and wrote it as a screenplay simply because it had come to me in images. At that point I had never even seen a screenplay.

He described the coincidental events that led to that first screenplay, *Barbarosa*, becoming a movie. A friend of his, Bud Shrake, saw the screenplay on his desk, read it, and told him it would sell. Bill sent it off to Bud's agent in New York, Cindy Daggner. "She read it and absolutely hated it." She wrote him a long letter. But when Bill rejected her criticism, telling her he was "looking for a salesman, not a critic," she sent the screenplay to two producers in Los Angeles, Barry Weiss and Phil D'Antoni (*The French Connection*) to "show me." They loved it. They wanted Bill to move to Los Angeles, but he refused. Over the years, they continued asking him to move, to New York or Cincinnati, wherever they were working at the time, until they finally stopped calling.

The picture was made years later, but the important lesson Bill learned from the experience was how his interest in photographing Mexican vaqueros dovetailed with creating visual stories in the form of screenplays. He had a deep appreciation for the Mexican cowboys, vaqueros. That appreciation gave him a sense of purpose. He

realized no one had documented the link between the vaqueros and their influence on the origins of the Texas cowboy. He followed his passion for creating a visual book of their history. The story of *Barbarosa* emerged in the form of a screenplay during his travel to Dallas collecting photographs for the book. He said he had tried other forms of writing but was always performing.

> My hand was trying to perform making a pretty sentence, but my head was somewhere else. It was ahead of it or behind it or off to the side of it. It was performance without content. But with the screenplay format, I could keep my hand and what I was seeing or feeling or projecting in sync.

The next hurdle Bill described was learning how to trust his gut or feeling nature. The success of his first writing effort scared him. He was concerned it was a "one-shot deal. So I wrote 500 and some odd pages in a week on coffee and cigarettes because I was so afraid of losing the play. But once I did that, quality became the question, not whether I could write something with a beginning, middle, and end." Once he built his confidence in his ability to craft screenplays he asked himself what stories he wanted to tell. He continued to struggle with connecting to his gut, the feeling aspect of his stories. He found tricks to help him overcome the thinking nature (the inner editor) and allow stories to freely flow out on the paper. One trick was deciding that only he would see the first draft. Therefore, he was free to write whatever moved him. "That's where I'm trying to find the content, the heart. You can always come back and put the bone underneath all that."

For Bill, developing the connection to his feeling state led to deep trust in his writing ability. He distinguished the difference between the feeling state and the creative process often taught in film schools.

> That is the piece [feeling]. For me. It's not for everybody. Nor is it necessary. And I sometimes think that the lucky people are not the ones that are determined to go for it. So much writing comes out of film schools and they don't teach, as far as I know, they don't teach kids to look for their hearts. They teach them creativity, the steps, and rhythms. That would have absolutely wrecked me as a writer. I mean, I probably could have done it and I think to some degree it's easier. If you think your way through a script and you get in a jam, you can generally think your way out. If you feel your way into a script, you get in trouble. It's not a thought process. You can wreck it with a thought process, but you kind of have to sit there. You just have to somehow feel your way out and sometimes that takes a while. The hardest thing is to get yourself away from it, to give yourself a chance to open up to the feeling. It's a strange bunch of contradictions…. It's not easy or regular for me to get that cord connected to that part of me that knows. But that's the process. What I know is that it's there. I have no doubts that it's there. My struggle is how do I reach up and connect to it.

Bill described two experiences with other artists that exemplified what he meant by reaching up and connecting to the feelings. One experience was an evening spent with Willie Nelson while they were working on the music for a movie.

> We got there about 6:30 or 7 in the evening. It was just Willie and me, a little tape recorder, and Willie's guitar. Willie started playing and he would watch me. We knew the movie we were writing for. So Willie would watch me and if I was interested or look pleased in what he was playing, he would build on it. But if I didn't look interested, he would drop it and pick up something else. This went on until 9 o'clock the next morning. It was just astonishing. It was music that had never been heard in the world. At one point, God knows what time it was, I said, "God damn, Willie. Where are you getting that?" And Willie said, "Oh, the air is just full of melodies." And he said, "You want a melody, you just reach up and grab it." When Willie told me that, it was utterly real for him. Of course, I couldn't imagine.

Bill went on to describe a similar experience with the composer for *Lonesome Dove:*

> He would call me at night and he had a contraption that he would put on the piano, put the phone on it, and play. It felt like his piano was in the room with me. One night he called and said, "Here's the theme." He put the phone in the little cradle and started playing. I wept it was so beautiful. He finally got on the phone and I said, "God damn, that's so beautiful. It's so beautiful. Where'd you get that?" He said, "Oh Bill, the air is just full of melodies. All you have to do is just reach up and grab one." He said verbatim what Willie said. And it's real for those guys…. I think that's true for all of us in whatever pursuit, not necessarily

> an artistic pursuit. It's all there. The rough thing is connecting to it, particularly in a time like ours where you are taught out of it.

Bill described how he connected with characters in his stories in a similar way.

> When I'm seeing it, I can freeze the frame and count buttons on the character's shirts. I can read a license plate across the street on a car, and so on. What that means is you are no longer outside it, you have stepped into it. That's what I mean when I'm talking about feeling. It's not outside feeling, it's inside, getting their feeling. So when you have a character that becomes very real on the paper, he or she is as real or more real to me than people I know in my daily life.

The challenge Bill described was finding ways to connect to that feeling level. He told the story of how he used driving as a way to access the visual images as he had with *Barbarosa*. When he was writing the mini-series for *Lonesome Dove*, he made trips to his beach house at South Padre, listening to the story on audiotapes, capturing visual images as he listened, then writing a rough draft of an episode once he arrived.

The feeling supplied the content. His thinking crafted the message. He said his process required the two working together, but the most essential was first accessing the feeling.

Defining his voice

Bill's sense of his own voice was reflected throughout the interview in his philosophy: The lessons he learned throughout his career choices and the wisdom he found through his characters. He defined voice as, "Here's how I stand in the face of the world." His said his particular voice was threaded together with his characters.

> Each one of those represents some either inner or outer aspect of the writer. I believe. And I think my voice is that collective voice. But what voice is to me is just sort of the confidence that's evident in the piece. Just the confidence. It's like Cormac [McCarthy]. Cormac is a dear friend. I absolutely love his writing but I do not pretend to understand it all. But I know he does. I know absolutely that he understands it. I know I don't. But his voice, his power, is so strong. And

> I've said this to him, "Shit, you know." So that's voice. Sort of an aura that surrounds a piece. You know, that's either authentic or not.

When asked if those same qualities (powerful, distinct energy or aura, and a sense of authority) applied to his own work, he responded:

> Yes. I'm not thoughtful about this. If the characters feel authentic to me, I go with them. And sometimes I go with them when they don't, hoping that they will. I make all kinds of deals with God, or try to. I won't curse him or help me understand this, God. A lot of this…. I mean, be careful. I don't want this to sound like I know what I'm doing. I don't. I mean, I'm floundering around all the time, but I'm fascinated by the creative process. And I think it is a great gift and a high calling, I really do. And I wish I were better. But I think I'm pretty much, generally speaking, as good as I can be. But I've got some good white horses and I've got some good black horses, or dominoes. And I have friends who, God, they are just great writers. I mean, they have the white domino for that, but they don't have the black domino to keep them writing. You know, the insecurity or need for money or whatever it is that'll keep them writing. So they write beautifully and they go do something else.

Bill described his black domino as the fear of not mattering, the fear of not belonging.

The shift in perception took place when he developed a philosophy of fear. "It was so much more emotional when I was young. Now I just realize it's a black domino. So now I embrace it because that's what drives the white one."

The personal philosophy that was essential for Bill's understanding of voice arose from an inner knowing that he repeatedly connected with in story form. The story of the black and white domino, talent and fear, was one he told to an actor.

> Let me tell you what I believe about a lot of this stuff. And it doesn't really matter to me whether this is true or not. It's a thing that works for me. I always believed in reincarnation even before I knew the word. I mean, I knew I knew things I couldn't know. Let me think about how to tell you this. There was an actor and this was back in the '70s or early '80s. God, he was looped on drugs of every kind…. Every night he would come to my room and want to talk and complain. I just could not bear it. One night, he was complaining about, whatever, and I said, "You've got to get rid of your fear." And he said, "What do you mean, I don't have any fear." I said, "Yes, you do. What you don't realize is

> that it's your fear that drives the good aspects if you'll let it, rather than just concentrating on the fear." Now, make it real clear, I had no idea what I was saying or what I was going to say. My desperation was to get him out of my room and I was going to try to talk him out of my room. So I said, "Don't you remember when we were kids, those Scotty dogs, the magnets, the white one and the black one? If you turn it one way, it'll suck the white one back, but if you turn it the other way and push it at the white one, it'll drive the white one. So all the negatives you should turn around and use to drive your positives. Your fear, let it drive your talent, which you are doing anyway." And I said, "But you are trying to run from you fear with all these drugs." He said, "Yeah, anyway." And then I said the most incredible thing. I said, "You know how this all happens, don't you? Life and being here in time." He said, "No." And I said, "Before you come down here, you sit at a table with a bunch of pals and one guy's got a set of black dominoes and a set of white dominoes."

Bill continued the story of how beings decided before entering this lifetime what the criteria would be. Included in that criteria were the talents and positive aspects, the white dominoes, along with the hardships or black dominoes, the fears, the physical or emotional deficits, etc. "For every plus you get, you get a minus. And if you use the minus right, it'll drive your pluses. But nothing exists without its polar opposite." Bill continued to talk about how the reincarnation system helped him understand God and how it helped him understand the role of his own insecurity and feelings of not belonging.

The discovery of how to deal with his own fear was one life lesson that he continued to believe today. Other important lessons included taking risks and developing a deep trust in the inner knowing he described earlier. These forms of understanding often arose through his writing, as he brought his characters into various conflicts and events. For example, when I asked him to explain a statement he made, "In order to be an artist, you have to lay naked on the table and open the windows and invite people in," and how he came to be willing to risk at that level, he responded:

> I think by feeling. Things would hit the paper and I just said, well, for me that's right. It wasn't a conscious question, "Is that right, is that not right, would people like that, would people not like that, would they think I was a screwball." It was none of that. It was, "Yeah! That's right. That's right." And you know, that's part of me. The rightness of that is part of who I am. Not necessarily part of anybody else in the world, but it is a part of who I am…. These things I've thought about or felt about, they are part of me, my being, and one of them is how do I know what I think until I see what I say. Or how do I know what I feel until I see what I say. Because when that does happen, you are getting signals from that other part of yourself. You just simply are. And it is difficult to lay down on the table and take all you clothes off and invite whoever to come in, have a look, and applaud or jeer. But if you're not willing to do that, you probably are not really risking what you should be risking to see what you've finally got. And what you have may finally be a disappointment. There are no guarantees. But you may be disappointed if you don't try that further down the track.

As I listened to his philosophy, I was touched by the level of compassion he felt for the creative urge in all people. He described other important pieces of wisdom, like a story about an art festival in South Padre where everyone painted the same sand dunes and sea grass. He was in awe of the creative process that led so many people to bring their work to display, rarely selling anything. Yet he also described a sense of sadness that most of those people never asked what really interested them. He felt they just painted sand dunes from a sense of "should" or thinking nature rather than tapping into their personal feeling nature.

Another important story he told was regarding his choice to focus on stories of the West. For him, the cowboy was symbolic of human values, such as friendship, determination, and guts. "They were like knights to me. And, that whole business with horses, you know, that power. Harnessing power and all that stuff, I guess. I mean, it's why it's still powerful in all of us." His characters were never victims of circumstances. Victims meaning: "Things happen to characters rather than characters making things happen." He went on to describe how his characters were different.

> The characters see things and say, "I'm not going to go that way. I'm not going to accept being a victim. I have the power to live in the world as an individual." Or as a member of the whole, but as an active member of the whole. Not somebody sitting back. I take issue with that. Victim mentality, "Oh, look what they did to me." Like I have no power.

His characters taught him, he said.

> That's the whole deal. I mean, what it is, is how do I know what I think until I see what I say. You didn't know you thought that or felt that and then all of a sudden it's there, and yeah, you agree with it totally. You know, all this is, is essentially having a monologue or a dialogue with yourself, depending on how you do it. That's all it is. And the more you can get in touch with that part that knows more than you know, consciously, I think, then the better you can express the whole of what you have to give.

The richness of Bill's wisdom was reflected in his storytelling. He said he found it easier to express his voice in writing or photography and found it challenging in filmmaking. The process of filmmaking required the interaction of many voices. "Sometimes that illuminates the vision the writer may have had and sometimes it diminishes it." When he found success in a film or TV script, it was a result of the collaboration.

> It's such a peculiar pursuit. It is so peculiar because it is so collaborative. And there's the old saying that steel sharpens steel, but iron rusts iron. You know, if you get the right people, it really can become something larger, like *Lonesome Dove.* If you don't get with the right people, it can really be a part of a tragedy. But it's what it is. And all of us who are bent to try and film a collaborative thing like this, you just have to know it.

Weaving the Thread of Artistic Voice

As I compared the above artists, I began looking for the development of the instrument or voice and the dimensions of artistry described by Dewey (1934). Was there a complete experience? What was the role of intuitive knowing? How did the artists test their knowing and incorporate it into their experience? Were they aware of the

rhythms moving their work toward fulfillment? And were they able to work an idea into a definite medium?

First, from the aspect of complexity science, were there patterns within the life of the individual that shaped the direction of development toward artistry as understood by Dewey (1934)? Both Dan and Bill described major turning points in their youth resulting from a gift. Dan received the gift of writing from his second grade teacher along with the encouragement to use his voice, to speak out. He described how he learned he had control over his behavior, rather than being labeled as a loud person. Here I began to notice the impact of the Aristotelian law of identity on the self-perception of a child and how different feedback from his environment began his new experience of having a greater sense of authority. Dan learned to embrace his ADD and learned how to use it to drive his talent. For example, he described how he did much of his later writing in coffee shops with lots of background noise. He also described how stories were constantly flowing through his head, like getting on an airplane and having the thought of the plane beginning to crash and a story evolving from that thought. Despite the flux of stories flowing through his mind, he also learned to focus on one or two stories and develop them into a screenplay, move them through production, and develop a market. Despite being in the early stage of developing his voice as a writer, he was well on his way to creating a strong instrument for carrying his stories.

Bill also received a gift at an early age, a book that contained a familiar story, from his aunt. Up until that time he used storytelling to help him belong. At the moment he discovered the story that was also part of the oral tradition that "grew out of the ground he was standing on," he experienced a profound awareness of how one

individual's work could have a major impact on the world. The seed of that idea became the story of Bill's life. In addition to becoming a successful writer, he created a place for young writers to learn the human struggle all writers experienced (the Southwestern Writers Collection) and he documented the history of the Mexican vaqueros, bringing them to life through his stories. Yet his most important career contribution may have been his decision to remain in Austin, to challenge the assumption that a person had to live in Hollywood to be a successful screenwriter. His decision to work and live in Austin paved the path for development of a community of independent filmmakers in the city. Bill described his ability to challenge established cultural assumptions in his life as an important quality leading to his success.

For both Dan and Bill, the second transition point involved facing their fears and taking a career risk. Dan faced the challenge of competing ethical beliefs. As a Christian, he valued a sense of integrity and wrestled with his decision to betray his employer while pursuing the financing for his first movie. He discussed his decision with his circle of advisors and his wife before taking the step that led to being fired. In addition, he faced the financial reality of stepping out of a secure corporate job into the entrepreneurial realm with greater financial risk. His belief that he was called to make movies and use the medium to tell his stories was reinforced by the feedback or evidence he found after making the decision, i.e. receiving the financing for his movies, circumstances surrounding the aesthetics of the moviemaking experience falling into place, and the flowing teamwork of his crew under his leadership.

Bill's second turning point was just as life changing as Dan's. His decision to give up his role in the publishing company and devote himself to writing involved facing

his fear. The fear that he would not be a great writer inhibited his desire to express himself until he became bored with the world he had created for himself. His process of developing his voice involved stepping out of that world, finding topics that interested him. He gave himself the first draft of everything he wrote, meaning writing what he wanted to write rather than writing for others. The confidence to continue writing was born from the serendipitous experience of writing a screenplay and a friend encouraging him to send it out into the film industry to sell. His first rejection initiated a conflict that led to others interested in producing his first screenplay.

Both Dan and Bill continued to develop their sense of voice, writing stories that had personal meaning and pursuing the means for those stories to be heard. In addition, through their storytelling, they each developed the reflexive quality Dewey (1934) called undergoing. The characters were the vehicle for experiencing and expressing the personal conflicts they faced in real life. Dan's devotion to his religious beliefs and how those beliefs were challenged by real life conflicts were worked through in his characters' lives. One character explored the difficult task of self-forgiveness when faced with responsibility for the death of one's child. Another one acted out Dan's desire for vengeance and unresolved anger toward sexual predators. Dan brought his religious philosophy to life through his characters and their struggle was his struggle.

Bill, too, created characters in his stories that reflected his own experiences. His mother's story was written in the movie, *Raggedy Man.* His love of the cowboy reflected the character values he felt were important. His characters were not victims, but took responsibility for their lives. He learned from their wisdom—" how do I know what I think until I see what I say. Or how do I know what I feel until I see what I say." As he

discovered what he knew through his characters, he then applied the wisdom to his own life including reframing his understanding of the relationship between fear and talent and learning to trust his own inner voices.

The difference I saw between Dan and Bill in regard to their sense of self-reflection lay in their source of understanding. Dan attributed much of his understanding of human conflict to lessons learned through the lens of his religion. He looked to Christianity as a resource for living his life and "leaving the world a better place through his stories." In contrast, Bill believed in an inner connection as the source of his knowing. He described how he worked to connect to that source, i.e. talking to the creative muse or writing his first draft for himself. He also articulated with great clarity the experience of that connection, how he was seeing the world from within the character rather than outside.

Both men's words appeared similar as they described their portrayal of characters. Dan stated that when he wrote about a character or acted the role of the character, he had to "become the character." However, the subtle difference between their understandings was important. I felt it contributed to the depth and richness of the characters they portrayed and influenced whether the characters were brought to life for the audience. As an example, Dan described what it was like to play the role of McGruder, a pedophile. The character appeared and was killed by the vigilante in the opening scene of *Promises Kept*.

> I never want to do that again, because you really have to go there. And I'll tell you…. I shot it two ways, just in case the distributors didn't like it. I shot one with a little girl and I shot another with a young teenager. So, I did everything twice. The little girl, of course, isn't an actor, and couldn't be. She was just cold and miserable. The teenager could act. She could act scared. And here I had all the control. I had her, and I was going to kill her, and I'd become the

> character…and the fear on her face…. What's really psychosomatic is…I'm carrying her into the woods and I'm putting my knee down to let her down and she's a bigger girl than the little 6 year-old. So when I go down, there were a couple of times when my knee found a rock and my knee was bruised. So, two nights later, I was getting in my bed and I put my knee down. All of a sudden I saw her face and I just thought, "I don't want to go there any more." So, you have to…. I can see where my psychologist friend talks about actors as being a very fine line away from, you know, insane. I know what he's saying because you really have to become schizophrenic.

Watching Dan's movies, his characters appeared stereotypic while Bill's characters felt alive. I wondered if Dan allowed himself to experience the full range of human emotion in the character of McGruder or limited himself to expressing the sadistic quality that led to a label of pedophile.

The difference between their work may have reflected Bill's distinction between thinking your way through a story and feeling it. One example Bill gave of the distinction involved how to tell a story.

> The story will tell you whether it wants to be simple or it wants to be more complicated. Bumping your characters against events or your events against characters, they are going to tell you, "Hey, let's go this way and see what's going on. See where we are going to go, what we are going to do, what happens."

In the above example, the characters decided the direction of the story rather than Bill creating the outcome that resolved his own internal emotions. Another example of his ability to connect with the humanness of characters involved his research of another screenplay.

> I was writing a movie called *A Night in Old Mexico,* and part of the action took place through Boystown. Boystown of course is whore town. You know, a border town between Mexico and Texas. So I went down there just to have another look around. I ran into or fell in with these photographers that go from whorehouse to whorehouse and for two bucks would take your picture sitting at a table with a bunch of prostitutes. They were not pornographic, but they were incredibly human and just absolutely broke you heart. And like that [pointing to one of the pictures in his office], I found it an enormously poignant picture, but

> not necessarily a heartbreaking picture. But there are some in the book that just absolutely break my heart. I couldn't bear to look at them long.

I felt the sense of compassion for people and his characters as Bill told me the above story. The ability to tap into the heart of his characters and allow their experience to move him, to tell their story, not his, helped me understand the meaning of his words:

> It wasn't until I was just about 30 that I found the courage to take my clothes off and lay down on the table, which is what, if you are really going for it as a writer, you do. You take all your clothes off, you lay on the table, and you open all the doors, all the windows, and you invite people in to have a look at you. And they applaud or they laugh, but that's the risk you have to take.

John Dewey (1934) described love of a subject and emotion as a key organizing influence in art:

> In the development of an expressive act, the emotion operates like a magnet drawing to itself appropriate material: appropriate because it has an experienced emotional affinity for the state of mind already moving. Selection and organization of material are at once a function and a test of the quality of the emotion experienced…. Without emotion, there may be craftsmanship, but not art; it may be present and be intense, but if it is directly manifested the result is also not art.
>
> There are other works that are overloaded with emotion. On the theory that manifestation of an emotion is its expression, there could be no overloading; the more intense the emotion, the more effective the "expression." In fact, a person overwhelmed by an emotion is thereby incapacitated for expressing it. There is at least that element of truth in Wordsworth's formula of "emotion recollected in tranquility." There is, when one is mastered by an emotion, too much undergoing… and too little active response to permit a balanced relationship to be struck. There is too much "nature" to allow of the development of art. Many of the paintings of Van Gogh, for example, have an intensity that arouses an answering chord. But with the intensity, there is an explosiveness due to absence of assertion of control. In extreme cases of emotion, it works to disorder instead of ordering material. Insufficient emotion shows itself in a coldly "correct" product. Excessive emotion obstructs the necessary elaboration and definition of parts.
>
> The determination of the *mot juste*, of the right incident in the right place, of exquisiteness of proportion, of the precise tone, hue, and shade that helps unify the whole it defines a part, is accomplished by emotion. Not every emotion, however, can do this work, but only one informed by material that is grasped and gathered. Emotion is informed and carried forward when it is spent indirectly in

> search for material and in giving it order, not when it is directly expended. (pp. 69-70).

Here I began to sense the distinction between voice with authority and artistic voice. Dan's stories and career choices reflected a growing sense of authority within his life. Like Bill, he trusted he could follow his heart and pursue a vision in filmmaking. However, his stories reflected his own raw emotion wrestling with outer cultural beliefs rather than questioning those cultural assumptions and trusting the wisdom of an inner knowing.

Bill's depth of life experience during his childhood, watching the emotions of World War II play out in his home, and career success created a history for trusting his intuitive connection. He, like Dan, held a cultural philosophy. But the assumptions of his philosophy, based on reincarnation, were tested and integrated into personal wisdom rather than accepted unquestioning. And his personal wisdom extended beyond beliefs related to reincarnation. He saw beauty in the drive to create. Observing the expanse of sea oat paintings at art fairs in South Padre stimulated his compassion for that drive in all humanity and captured another distinction between voice and artistic voice—those artists never questioned whether they were genuinely interested in sea oats, according to Bill. "It's not, 'Where's my sand dune, where's my sea oats. Do I want to do sea oats?" Bill's commitment to follow his own heart and risk showing the world his love of humanity in all its richness, opened the hearts of his audience for his characters and stories; created a resonance or felt connection between the audience and the characters' life struggles.

The personal wisdom that grew out of Bill's interaction with his art form also reflected the unity of experience described by Dewey (1934). The turning point at age 12—the gift of the book and the deep awareness he experienced upon reading the familiar

story—the subsequent separation from his love of writing due to fear, his reconnection with his writing, and the wisdom of embracing his fear and its role in his writing demonstrated Dewey's description of a complete experience—the seed of art. Bill's artistry was also reflected in his ability to create rhythm in form. I remember watching his movies, *A Perfect Storm* and *Legends of the Fall*. In those movies, the main characters and their relationship to fear was a key ingredient. Bill was able to build suspense and conflict among his characters. As an audience member, I resonated with the challenges and decisions they faced. I could feel the emotions of the characters and the rising sense of peril they faced. Dan's characters in *Keyman* and *Promises Kept*, in contrast were less believable. The difference in funding for the movies surely had an influence on that contrast. However, I found Dan's stories to be less believable and an evangelical undertone left me unsympathetic with his characters. His main character in *Keyman* was distraught to the point of psychosis and abandoned his family. However, in the final scene as he was dying in the flames of a burning building after saving the life of another child, he saw a huge cross amidst the flames burning down the walls. As he stared at the cross, the light shining through it intensified. I intellectually understood the symbolism of redemption in Dan's story, however I did not experience the sense of joy or relief I imagined the character "was supposed to feel." My lack of resonance or empathy was possibly shaped by my own experiences with evangelical principles that left me unsympathetic to their cause in contrast with Dan's experience of inclusion and acceptance. However, I wondered how the story would have been different had the human emotions of grief and later self-acceptance organized the characters choices.

Finally, I wanted to consider the question of Dewey's description of direct experience. I heard Bill clearly articulate his own direct experience with his characters and stories as well as observing Willie Nelson and another musician having direct experience writing songs. The experience resembled the state of flow described by Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) research. Those experiences included the nine elements of flow:

> (a) clear goals every step of the way, (in flow we always know what needs to be done), (b) immediate feedback to one's actions, (we always know how well we are doing), (c) a balance between challenges and skills, (d) action and awareness are merged, (concentration is focused on what we do), (e) distractions are excluded from consciousness, (we are aware only of what is relevant here and now), (f) no worry of failure, (we are too involved to be concerned with failure), (g) self-consciousness disappears, (h) sense of time becomes distorted, (we generally forget time, and hours may pass by in what seems like a few minutes), and (i) activity becomes autotelic (enjoyed for itself). (pp. 111-112)

Dan did not articulate an experience of flow with his writing. However, I do not want to dismiss the possibility that he may have experienced it through his directing, music writing, or editing. During the time I spent observing Dan while he was directing *Promises Kept*, I felt a different kinesthetic experience than I had felt with any other person. I described it as a sense of ease, as if there were no obstacles. When I asked him about that felt sense, he said others had commented about that feeling too. We discussed how well his filming went, with few conflicts or lost time. The question then of whether he experienced aesthetic consciousness (Dewey, 1934) or flow during his directing remained unanswered.

Serendipity

I want to bring up the topic of serendipity because it played an important role in my project and in the lives of the two participants above. It also is an element of

complexity theory—the existing conditions at the moment of decision at a bifurcation point influence the path chosen. Those conditions cannot be predicted.

According to James E. McClellan (2005), science often ignores conditions that are unpredictable or chance happenings. He described his good fortune of discovering, by chance, the "historical turning point when scientists—the producers of knowledge—first gained control over the publication of the results of their research" (p. 2). His article chronicled the numerous serendipitous or lucky turns of events that led him to first wonder about specialist control over publishing and then finding historical documents that led to the development of institutional norms and conduct. He used this case as an example for a deeper discussion of the role of serendipity, luck, or accident in historical research.

McClellan (2005) described the origins of the word serendipity. Horace Walpole "coined the word 'serendipity' in 1754 from a nominally Persian fairy tale, *The Three Princes of Serendip"* (p. 5). Fine and Deegan (2005) described the story about three young princes who were traveling on a journey when a camel driver inquired if they had seen his missing camel. "For sport, they claimed to have seen the camel, reporting correctly that the camel was blind in one eye, missing a tooth, and lame" (p. 1). Due to the accuracy of their description, the camel driver believed they had stolen the camel and had them arrested. However, when the camel was subsequently found, the Emperor of the land asked them how they learned those facts. "That the grass was eaten on one side of the road suggested that camel had one eye, the cuds of grass on the ground indicated a tooth gap, and the traces of a dragged hoof revealed the camel's lameness" (p. 1).

According to Remer (1965), "Walpole created serendipity to refer to the combination of accident and sagacity in recognizing the significance of a discovery" (pp. 6-7).

McClellan (2005) also discussed how "accident played an essential role in the creation of new knowledge in the discipline of history" (p. 6). He researched the topic of accidental discoveries in historical research and found no discussion of the important role of serendipitous events. The final reports on research were polished and appropriately rhetorical. None of them dealt with the "messy realities of historians" (p. 9), the involvement with the data and the constraints of research.

McClellan explored the question of why serendipitous events were rarely acknowledged. He concluded that cultural narratives within art and science excluded the possibility that their results could be the product of an accident. Thus the actual route taken by the scientist was often different than the one reported. Constructions were rational. "Inevitably, then—and this is the main point—once a rational narrative falls into place, the accidental factors that were essential to its creation disappear from the account. The often haphazard scaffolding required to build a work is dismantled once the edifice is complete" (p. 13).

McClellan went on to discuss the importance of including accidental events in the reporting of history. He said inclusion would convey the contingent character of works and help prepare new historians to maintain an open mindset needed for discovery. He concluded that accident, luck, and serendipity were not necessarily the elephant in the room that needed to be recognized, but "more like the staff in the kitchen whose labor we do not ordinarily think about, but who make real contributions to the meals we digest at the high table of intellectual inquiry and discourse" (p. 20).

I include this discussion of serendipity, accident, and luck because it plays an important role in this research. I suspect it demonstrates the interconnected nature of society, possibly "the hand of God" as Dan said. However, excluding it eliminates a potential critical dynamic in the emergence of artistic voice. I choose to bring it into the discussion and will continue to explore its role in the lives of the remaining artists.

Portraits of Artistic Voice in Process

Chapter 5

Intimacy became the central character or concept revealed through the interviews, observations, and writing about the various film artists. It was subtle. I flashed on its importance periodically during the process and then it quickly faded. During each interview, I noticed moments when a participant touched a memory or thought that stimulated their emotions—an interesting experience, a surprise event, or a turning point with deep significance. In those moments, a story was often told and I began to visualize their world, like a movie playing in my head. For a brief period, we stepped out of the question/answer intellectual exchange and I entered their world.

I asked them at the end of each interview to describe their concept of voice and how they might describe their own artistic voice. Each person struggled with answering the question. Clearly each had thought about it in their own self-reflection over the years, as they described. But few had arrived at an answer. An element I began to notice as I listened to them was self-acceptance. As each acquired the skills and confidence they needed to express their voice, they continued to explore the stories or characters they wanted to present. Revealing those choices revealed more of who they were as artists, to the audience as well as themselves. Self-acceptance released them from self-judgment. Opening to deeper parts of themselves, creating characters or events, and then releasing those forms into the world required the discipline of letting go. Each form was given to its audience, like a balloon let go into the air to soar or not wherever the wind might take it. The process of creating, letting go, and learning from the audience response set the stage for the next project. The love of the process—developing intimacy with the

material, struggling to find form, removing what blocked the heart of the piece, and finding the significant moments that revealed the character or theme—created deeper awareness and perception of their craft, their ability, and themselves.

Following are portraits of the remaining eight artists. Rather than viewing their stories through a scientific lens, examining their histories to uncover commonalities and creating conceptual understanding of their journey, I decided to describe more of who they were, framed through an interview relationship. I was looking for key milestones and major turning points in their lives, their understanding of the significance of those events, and how those events shaped their ongoing development as artists.

Sandra Adair

I met Sandra when she was a guest speaker in our editing class. The idea for researching artistic voice was new. I asked her to lunch to explore whether film artists would be interested in talking with me about their own voice. Our conversation quickly became focused on her experiences that were hard to describe or beyond language. I told her about Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) research on "flow" and my interest in learning more about her own creative process. She encouraged me to move forward with the project and volunteered to be a participant.

Almost a year later, the project was approved and she agreed to meet with me. She was in the middle of editing another Richard Linklater (dir., 2003) film, *The School of Rock.* The interview with Sandra spanned her life history related to becoming a film editor, the development of her craft, and her experience of finding her own voice. She had worked in the film industry for approximately 30 years in both Hollywood and

Austin. Her collaboration with Richard Linklater began after she and her family made a commitment to live in Austin 11 years ago.

Life for her began in Carlsbad, New Mexico. She described her father as a tailor by profession with the desire to be a musician or comedian. Her mother was a "typical Jewish mother" and Sandra was the youngest of three siblings. Her brother was ten years older and her sister was six years older. The family moved their business to Las Vegas when she was in the third grade after their business failed in New Mexico.

Despite her parent quarrels, often related to her father's alcoholism, she described growing up with a close-knit family. Her father kept them entertained and she was close to her siblings. Her enjoyment of art began with a Christmas gift from her older brother who she described as a great gift-giver. When she was in high school, he gave her a set of oil paints and canvas. She remembered how perceptive she felt he was, wondering how he knew she would like the gift.

She began painting and "hanging out" with the artistic clique in school and went on to take art classes at the California College of Arts and Crafts. She had to drop out, though, when her family could no longer support her education. At that point, she said she also realized she did not have the talent that she saw in her peers. Unsure what she wanted, she accepted her brother's invitation to work as his assistant on a film-editing project. She remembered her experience of that first day.

> I had no idea about anything about film when I first came into the editing room. To me it was all foreign. I had no vocabulary to converse with people about it. I learned from experience and experience alone. I learned about film by asking questions and just being in the business. I never went to film school. I never really read a book about film. But from the first day—and I remember it very, very vividly—I was so excited. I was just excited to my core about it.
>
> I started out doing extremely menial tasks like, "Put this role of film up and wind through it really slowly. Look for a frame where the clapper goes down

> like that, and when you see that frame, put an X on it." I didn't even know enough to ask, "What does that mean? What is a slave?" I didn't even ask any questions. I just started doing the most menial things. I was on one feature for maybe nine months and in that time period, I learned how to use all the equipment. I just went on from that first job and was the first assistant right after that.

Sandra was a quick study under the tutelage of her brother and they collaborated many times over the years on various projects. She continued to work as an assistant editor for the next ten years, learning the editing process. She described the slow development of her voice during the process.

> I came to understand what an editor really does and what that relationship between director and editor is, how to behave in a cutting room, what the protocol is, when to speak, when not to speak, when your opinion is worthy of being voiced or not. I mean, it can be a very politicized kind of environment, especially if there's producers, directors, editors, and studios involved.

Initially she described feeling intimated and scared in her transition to editor. As she worked on "bigger and bigger pictures with bigger and bigger stars," she said her opinion became valued.

> I could tell when I started to know what I was talking about when some of the bigger editors that I was working for would ask my opinion about something. So I slowly started to gain confidence that at least I wasn't making dumb comments and that I would be invited to come and view stuff. They would want my feedback.

Over time, she developed the familiarity with the wide variety of editing tools and the challenges each presented along with awareness of the film editing process.

> It's hard for me to separate that tool and the method that I used to cut things—at least in my early years—from the experience of actually editing because you have to figure out, "I want to do ABC. Okay, now how do I do that?"
>
> I think the tools ultimately, with experience, become intuitive. You don't have to think about using the tools after a while; you just can do it. But not when you're just learning. When you're learning how to do a craft, part of that learning process is learning how to use the tool.

Her first job as an editor versus an assistant editor was working with her brother on a documentary he was producing. The medium was challenging and new, so she had to learn to edit in a new format.

> It was confusing. We had a tremendous amount of footage. We worked on a very cognitive level, like with three-by-five cards. Not a lot of intuitive editing going on at all. And then every once in a while, you'd hit a pocket. Like, I'd be driving along in my car and I'd hear something on the radio and I'd go, "That music right there would be so cool under this kind of scene." Then I would start to feel that ownership of the material on a level that is what makes me able to edit now. Just this kind of, "Here we go!" It starts to get very hard to talk about, but when I say "ownership of the material," it's sort of a taking control of the situation in a way that I can start thinking about how to best manipulate it and bring something of myself to it, like an image or this piece of music. So there were a few times in that documentary when I managed that, but not many.

When I asked Sandra to elaborate on that feeling of ownership, she said,

> I know the material. I can feel what needs to happen, and if I'm not seeing it, then maybe we should try ABC or D. Then having some understanding of being able to evoke a sensation from an audience is sort of the first inkling. I don't know. I don't know how you can talk about that. But just being able to look at something and say it's not evocative or it's not scary or it's not funny. If I try to imagine it from someone else's shoes, I can't. I can only do it from my own instinct. But over time, I've learned to trust my instincts.

Finding voice within the editing process was different than the process found in screenwriting. The starting points were different. She was presented with the script and film footage rather than creating those forms.

> Honestly, every film, every project that I ever worked on was a whole different game. It's like a blank slate, starting over from scratch every time I start a film. That's the nature of the medium. It's all new people, an all new story, usually all new equipment, all new assistants, all new location and editing room. And you have a script that's been written by a new writer, interpreted by new actors, directed by a new guy. It's just a whole new experience every single time, and I always walk into it being totally scared. And that's my little secret, is that I'm always scared that somebody's going to realize that I have no clue what I'm doing at the very beginning of a project and I'll get fired before I have a chance to figure out what's going on, do something to earn the job.

But over the years, Sandra, like other artists, learned to deal with that fear.

> So, I asked an editor once, "Are you scared? Don't' you get intimidated when the studio heads come over here and the director is upset?" The producers on that movie yelled all the time. And I said, "I'm so intimidated by the producers I can't even function. Aren't you scared? Aren't you uncomfortable?" And he said, "Yeah, I'm scared. I just embrace my fear and I say, 'Okay fear, come on! We're going to work together.'" And he just totally solved that whole issue for me with that one comment. It was just like…everybody's scared. Nobody really knows what they're doing and you just have to embrace your fear and know that that's part of it. And ever since then, I don't feel afraid to acknowledge that I feel scared. I think fear is a great motivator in some ways. It keeps me very diligent.
>
> For example, I won't show something if it's not ready to be seen. I won't even leave the room until I know it's at least presentable, out of fear that someone might see it and realize that I've been struggling or something.

We continued to talk about her process of developing her voice but I became curious about where she was now. What was her experience after developing a sense of ownership and confidence in her ability?

> I think on every film, I get…For example, in this film [*The School of Rock*]. It's a daunting task to put together a film, any film. You have all these shots and all these people depending on you, and in the end you have to eat your lunch, eat your candy bar, make you phone calls, diddle around, and talk with your assistants. Finally at some point, I have to just say, "Okay. I'm going to go nuts if I keep procrastinating. Shut the door, and just go in there and do it." Every film I've ever worked on, when I go in there and I'm doing it, especially in the first cut, I just black out the world. Sometimes I put on headphones so that there are no distractions. I just swim through it. It's like swimming the English Channel or something. Get to the other side. And then, when I'm done, I can't even remember what I did [laughs]. Really! So what is it in the editing process that makes you decide to use this piece instead of that piece at that exact moment? I don't know. I don't think it's a cognitive process for me, at least not initially.

She described more of the process, taking notes while watching the dailies and talking with the director. Sometimes not taking notes. When I asked about her mood, whether it was playful or relaxed as she swam with the material, she said,

> No, what I feel like a lot of times is…you know the cartoons with the cat and the dog and they get into a wrestling fight and there's this big puff of smoke and you see this, "Rrrrr!" That's how I feel when I'm doing it. I always come out and feel like, "Okay. I've just been in this giant wrestling match." Sometimes I use the phrase "wrestle it to the ground" because a lot of times I'll get it in my head that

> things have to happen a certain way, because I can feel that. I can sense that it's got to flow this certain way because I want it to. And sometimes I will it to and then sometimes I just have to get in there, mush it and squeeze it and stretch it and shorten it and put something else in there to make it sound just right. It gets down into total minutiae, and then I come out and I go, "Yep, that's how I wanted it to be." So that's why it ends up being like some sort of wrestling match.
>
> I'll just start and it'll start coming together, and then I'll go, "You know what? I see what needs to happen now." And I'll make a duplicate version, and I'll put my initial version to the side and label it number one. Then I'll start on the duplicate of it, call that number two, and then all of a sudden I'll be like, "This is what needs to happen. That piece needs to come up here. I need to do this, that, and the other thing." Then before I know it, it's sort of in the wrestling match phase of it, because I've gotten familiar enough with it by doing version one. I've become familiar with it at a very detailed level. I've got the rhythm of it kind of scoped out, and also, I've made a mental note of all the things that are not right; like if there's a wrong rhythm or something that doesn't feel right. Then I can go in and just sort of quickly put it together. Once I know what I'm going to do, it doesn't always take me much time to make it pan out.

As Sandra described her process, I began to get a visual image of intimacy and the relationship she built with the material. As other artists described, she detailed a more intellectual editing process as the film reached its final phases, lengthening or shortening scenes, changing sequences. Those phases were more collaborative and the project involved the community of people working on the project. Her role in the collaboration was to "bring my intuition and instinct, which I trust, as well as my own life experience of what I think about people, what they would and wouldn't do, what's scary and what's funny, and all that kind of stuff. I bring that, but I'm not working alone."

Sandra described how the collaborative process added another dimension of creativity to the project. In contrast to wrestling with the material alone, she found dialogue could be playful.

> I do a lot without being asked. For example, in my current working situation, the director will leave for the day. I may have been cooking up something in my mind, so I put it together and then the next day, or whenever it seems appropriate, I will say, "You know, I tried something and I think it might be pretty neat. Would you like to look at it?" They will either say yes or no. Usually yes. Then

> the director will maybe get an idea from what I've presented. He'll go, "Yeah, that's pretty neat. But what if we did this?" "Yeah, what if we did this!" You know, we feed on each other. That's the greatest, most fun part of the collaborative experience, where you can bring something and the other person brings something. It gives you another idea and then it just grows.

She continued to describe how the feedback she received from the audience reinforced her intuitive perceptions about timing and rhythm. Over the years, the feedback began to instill greater confidence.

When I asked her the final question about how she would define voice she said,

> I think anybody who puts themselves out there to create something for other people, enjoyment or whatever, is tapping into something of themselves that they feel a need to share. I just think that people who choose to do that, who choose to write, direct, paint, or dance, any of that. It's who they are. It's in their genetic being, in the DNA almost.
>
> It's part of being human. It's part of a means of expression that we've called craft or art or work or whatever. It's in all of us and some of us have tapped into it and some have tapped into other things that are more on the surface….
>
> You can tell the difference between someone who has an inherent ability, even if you can barely recognize the seed of it. Like at South by Southwest. They're not really fully conceived, but you can tell there's something about it where they're learning. They're learning how to craft a film and all the buttons aren't on it yet, but they can be.

She continued to describe those people as unique, talented, charismatic, and in touch with their own ability. She said there were no particular qualities that were common to people with a unique voice but she felt moved by them, had an innate sense that they were different. So I asked her if that concept of voice applied to her own work and, with urging, she was able to say yes.

> If you just look at it from a mathematical point of view, you've got 20 shots in a scene and you've got 24 frames per foot and each shot is 100 feel long. Think about how many different edit points there could be in a scene. If you lined up 100 editors, every editor would cut that scene differently. Some of them might be similar, but probably none of them would be identical.

However, she was not able to talk about her own voice, her own unique attributes. She could only describe her ability to observe people, her empathic understanding of people, and her enjoyment of dialogue with friends and family as fueling her selection process.

Don Howard

Don Howard was also an editor and filmmaker. He worked primarily with documentary films, including directing, filming, and producing his own work, *Letter from Waco* and *Nuclear Family.* He had worked in the film industry for about 25 years, but his path was very different from Sandra's. He completed his M.A. degree in Radio, TV, and Film at The University of Texas at Austin, then worked at a "day job" and edited or filmed his documentaries around his other schedule. He became a professor at UT in 1998 in the Communications department.

Don's artistic path held a profound turning point. When he was 22 years old, he dropped out of a philosophy graduate program. He did not know the direction he wanted his life to go. So he left Texas, vowing never to return, and moved to New Hampshire to stay with his best friend. He said it was as far as his money would take him away from Texas.

The next year was spent sorting out his life and deciding whether he had the courage to pursue what he really loved—film. He described that period as one of the toughest in his life. It was winter, he was alone much of the time, and he had very little money. He lived with his friend and the only job he could find was delivering pizza on a night shift.

The reality of the hardships he faced contradicted his life before that. Most of his life he said he succeeded at everything he pursued. Philosophy challenged him for the first time. He felt he could be a mediocre philosophy professor, but not a creative one. He faced defeat for the first time in his life and was scared. He hated Texas at the time and "had issues" with his family. He said he was confused and needed to get down to "ground zero and really deal with myself." It was a new place for him, emotionally.

> The hard part was being honest with myself about who I was. I grew up in a Protestant background where you're taught a lot of guilt. Much of it was shedding that without being, "I can do anything I want." I had a lot of trouble with even recognizing where I had strengths. I couldn't even recognize myself without then apologizing before I'd even recognized I wanted to be an artist. It was hard to get past that enough to make an inventory of what I had going for me. So, a lot of it was tearing that down.

Don said he searched to find what he was really interested in. He loved music but decided he did not want to pursue music as a career. His parents were both musicians but he decided he was not. He said his thoughts kept coming back to film. He did not grow up on movies and was not a movie buff. But he discovered foreign films in college at Baylor University. For him, it was a way to connect with the outer world.

He described his love of film as more intellectualized than most. "I saw it as a really interesting way to communicate." The problem he faced was deciding if he loved it enough to commit his life to it. Movies kept coming back to him as the one thing that "sent him there" because "it was this window into a deeper world of people that I could never really meet individually."

So he examined how he might approach filmmaking for himself. He decided it could be a test. It meant facing his fear of being a failure, swallowing his pride, and returning to Texas. He knew he had to take the pressure to succeed off himself, he would

be older than most of the other students, and he would be competing with exceptionally talented people. So he told himself he was willing to be seen as weird or different. In his inventory, he also recognized he was a slow developer or late bloomer because he was " a little scared of people in social settings." Through the winter, he began to find the resources he needed to choose this path, like patience with himself and self-acceptance. He decided it might be good for him to not be "the smartest kid in the class for a change." And in the end, he decided filmmaking was the thing he really loved and wanted to do. He returned to Texas after that year and entered the RTF program at UT.

Over the years, he developed a philosophy about his relationship with film. The camera lens was a way to watch the world from a solitary viewpoint, developing an intimate connection with people's lives while maintaining a degree of distance. He speculated that the sense of distance he always felt may have come from an early childhood experience. He said his father told him the story that he contracted pneumonia at two or three months of age.

> I was in an oxygen tent for a couple of months. All I remember is my dad told me, this is painful to imagine from his point of view, that they ran out of places to give me shots. He said he remembered at one of those weeks I got 70 shots. And he remembered them giving them to me in my stomach. I don't know. I'm not into glib explanations about how things got this way, but there was something about my dad telling me about that that really rang a bell. There's something about my point of view of the world that it falls in line with. There's a certain kind of otherness that I can't quite explain. It's more like this apartness that has always seemed natural to me.

Despite his feeling of distance, he said he found close friends and maintained those relationships for long periods of time in his life.

He described his relationship with his father as conflictual, though. Throughout Don's life, his father was revered. He was a superintendent of the arts programs in Waco

public schools and a choir teacher early in his career. Despite the fact that he had not taught choir in 40 years, Don said he continued running into people who knew him as Ken Howard's son. They often said, "Well, do you know, my whole family just reveres him. He…we all had choir from him and he's just almost like god to us." Yet, Don knew his father disapproved of him. A young man that his father befriended once told Don,

> "There's one thing I don't understand. You know, your dad told me one time that you were the only young person he'd met that he couldn't get along with." To hear somebody else tell you that was really weird because I'd always wondered if it was just my perception that we didn't connect. Now we've agreed to make a truce. I really care for him and he feels the same way about me. But he just disapproves of me. And I think it's that he disapproves of himself. And he holds me to a standard that he doesn't hold all those other kids to.

Don talked about how hard it was growing up, working to be his best, and feeling he could never be perfect. The turning point, deciding to pursue what he loved, was made more meaningful because he was giving up pleasing others for the first time, listening to what he needed to feel successful, finding the self-acceptance to discover what interested him, and committing to following his heart.

Once he made the choice to pursue film, Don began making documentaries he felt he was proud of. He found it hard to describe his personal point of view of the world. A key to his perspective was his love of the medium and its ability to reveal life at a deeper, human level in all its complexity. He defined success for himself as his ability to portray honest and complex human experiences, not financial success or fame.

Don noticed how our interview exemplified the subtle layering of human interactions he worked to reveal. The camera was rolling as I filmed Don's description of a self-reflective filmmaker he admired—Ross McElwee (dir., *Sherman's March,* 1986).

He described McElwee's attempt to film a documentary of Sherman's march through the south but the film quickly became a self-portrait of his often painful attempts to find love, return financially broke to live with his family, while maintaining an ability to poke fun at himself. Don admired the combination of unique characters, absurd situations, arrogance on the part of the filmmaker, and the filmmaker's willingness to let the audience laugh at him. He felt those qualities reflected the humanity of the particular film as well as the medium in general. He described feeling somewhat like McElwee in that moment as we continued the interview.

Don said the closest he could get to McElwee's level of self-revelation was his *Letter from Waco* film. He was born in Waco the year after a destructive tornado wiped out the city's downtown. The metaphor that captured the feeling of the documentary was the hole that was left in the city after the storm. The metaphor arose from his personal experience with growing up there:

> It's not in the movie because I couldn't quite figure out how to shoot it. But in Waco, remember, the tornado hit and there is no downtown Waco that has any age to it. I never saw [the destruction]. It doesn't exist for me. So, I found out about it by looking at pictures. Then after a while, I realized, of course there was a downtown. I don't know what I was thinking. It was just a given to me that there's nothing down there.
>
> When I started seeing these pictures of what the square looked like, it was really fascinating to me. I did a lot of research about that but I was always thinking, "This wouldn't be interesting to anybody else. It has to be a revelation to you. And if you don't have the 'nothing' that's in your head, then there's no revelation." But I remember being down there one time, downtown. I used to just walk around down there to try to feel it, you know? I remembered seeing these postcards and pictures of the old train station which was never rebuilt. So, I'm walking around in this totally empty space. And, I look down and all of a sudden I realize there's this brick. This is real pretty red brick pavement. Clearly like 1900 vintage. And then I thought, "Oh, I must be on a street." And I'm looking around and…but there couldn't be a street here, 'cause there's the streets. And it's just rubble. Then I realized, "This is a train yard." And unless you're walking right across it, you wouldn't see it. And that's the metaphor of the whole thing. It's like, you don't have to dig very far to see…a whole different reality.

> There were whole generations of Wacoans that would consider this place to be almost a tragedy, or they would remember picking up their son from the war here. But to me, this is utterly meaningless, this is just a big empty hole. But look, here's the evidence…. And so that generates everything. Instead of being a narrative or a story, it's more like, all I have to do is couch everything I'm showing you in terms of, "If you look a little deeper…," Finding that view told me how to make the movie. And for me, the key is always finding it within the material rather than imposing your prejudice on it.

He went on to describe that philosophy of editing, the feeling of the piece had to grow out of the material.

> It's by honing in on your perceptions and letting it tell you, that you get something good…. If you really just try to do your best to perceive it the way it is and meet it on its own terms, then you have a chance to do something that really gets underneath peoples' skin.

I was struck here by the metaphor, "really gets underneath people's skin." Possibly a chance remark, but the image of needles in an infant's stomach came to my mind, the combined experience of pain and healing, as I listened to him describe his goal with a film.

Don also described everyone's unique way of seeing as voice. Voice was unique for him. "It's about you, it's spoken out in the world, it's different from everyone else. And, of course, it's never totally different from everyone else." He described Michael Jordan's voice as the way he "slams a basketball or dribbles, the thing that makes him distinctive." He found it harder to describe his own voice, so I asked if he would describe qualities he admired in the voice of others.

> Somebody that's really perceptive, that really is seeing deeper than I see. The other thing is somebody that manages to be perceptive without being either cruel or cold. They're wise enough to know that deeper perception involves deeper acceptance. And that's a struggle for me, but that's the hope. That's the artists that are really respected, I think. Their voice means something to me. They maintain an understanding they're just a person. And that all people have beauty.

Don's documentary, *Nuclear Family*, was released after this interview and reflected the irony and love he felt for the Texas culture he grew up in.

Nancy Schiesari

Nancy was trained as an artist in London at the Central School of Art. She later became a cinematographer, director, and producer. Her most recent film was *Hansel Mieth: Vagabond Photographer* (2003), a PBS docu-drama. She was the cinematographer for *Regret to Inform* (1998) and *Poco Loco* (1995) as well as other films. She was also a professor in the RTF department at the University of Texas at Austin.

Nancy established her career as a cinematographer in Britain and continued to work on projects outside of Austin. She found it difficult to work full time and compete with full-time cinematographers in the local industry so devoted much of her time to teaching and family. Yet her life as an artist remained the defining element in her career.

She grew up in Mississippi with an Italian mother she described as strong, "very aggressive and very assertive. She adored her father, a doctor, but said he was passive-aggressive. She felt oppressed in her family, describing herself as passive, growing up living a life of privilege. Her own mother felt stifled by her life and constantly pushed Sandra to not be tied down by her children. Sandra's aunt was her refuge when her mother was going through "her many, many crazy, violent mood swings." She said her aunt was a partisan in the resistance in World War II.

Before Sandra found her role as cinematographer, after art school, she lived the life she fantasized about in high school—the artist painting in a garret in Italy. But

becoming an artist had its challenges. While in school, she was a "frustrated figurative painter." Abstract work and minimalism were the trend. But she responded to using reality and space as a starting point for painting. Her professors informed her that photography had taken over the figure. Painting "was about two dimensions and surface." So she learned the language of abstract art:

> I really understood the beauty of that language of laying the mark and then responding with another mark, or laying a color and then putting down another color. So I did learn to sing that song and enjoyed singing it. But it left a part of me unanswered, and that was a kind of response to what we call reality.

After graduation, she moved to Italy, taught English, and obtained another art degree. There she lived on a mountainside and painted the landscape each morning. She also attended a few film classes. Then the Vietnam War ended and she decided she wanted to contribute to social change.

Serendipitously, she saw a cameraman working, wondered what he was doing, went to talk with him, looked through the camera and felt, "Wow, this is it." At the time she was watching Ken Loach films, an English social realist, and put the two together, deciding,

> Whatever that is, that's what I want to do. That's what I need to do. I need to work in a creative realm, which is through the camera, lighting, framing, an extension of painting; but do it with a committed group of people whose goal is to make a film that's going to have some meaning or comment, a catalyst for change.

From there, she went back to London and applied to film school. There again she encountered resistance to her desire to learn narrative and documentary film. The new wave was post-modernist, with structural devices taking the audience out of the film. Though she did not get to make the movies she wanted, she worked with a poster collective that was also a film collective.

> We were a group of left-wing ex-art students who got together and formed a cooperative to make media. That was challenging because I became disappointed in a lot of the ideals of communal living. I never used the word 'I' for four years. It was always 'we.' I wasn't able to realize my potential while inside the group, but I learned a lot about class politics and gender.

After she left film school and began working to get her union card as a camera assistant with the BBC, she learned her craft.

> I went on a shoot to Zimbabwe right after they achieved liberation from Ian Smith's regime, which was Rhodesia. They had just won their liberation war. So that was a total experience. I shot a lot of film. When I came back, I pitched an idea to Channel 4 to make a documentary in Glasgow about the Irish Republican movement up there, these young people from the ghetto who learned to play instruments, flute and drum, to play these traditional Irish songs. They originally came to Scotland as Irish immigrants and were engaged in a war to go back to their home of origin. I was making a documentary about the healing power of art, of music, and the fact that this group got together and played music for political reasons but had a creative outlet. That was something I directed and produced.

At this point in her story, I noticed Nancy's commentary about herself—not having the strength to continue in a chosen direction or to fight against a trend. She made the comments, "I don't have the character," or "I didn't have the strength," as she described giving up her realist painting, her enthusiasm for social change, or her pursuit of social documentaries. I later commented about the strength it must have taken for a woman to break into a field dominated by men. She reiterated the emotional cost, in the form of anxiety and depression, that plagued her as she attempted to combine single parenting, a career, and following her creative pursuits.

But, back to her key turning point. After she completed her film about the Irish musicians, Ken McMullen gave her the opportunity to be the director of photography on a feature film. She described it as a huge challenge because of her inexperience. During her first shoot of the film, though, she described having an experience:

> On the first day, the very first shot, which was a really complicated shot that involved a jib and crane movement, tracking movement and light this huge set. At that moment, while I was shooting that film, this voice came up and said, "Born to light." It was like, "Oh, my God. Where did that voice come from?" I don't know where it came from, but I remember looking through the 35mm mammoth camera with the whole crew around me. There were these huge HMI lights that I put into play in a set that looked like India that was enormous. I don't know how many yards it was, half a mile or whatever. At a certain moment, this voice came up and said, "Born to light." I've never heard the voice again. That was really important. It had taken about ten years to get there, from painting, through film school, through politics, through rejections, and not being able to get into the film union for a long time, and then having this opportunity with this amazing artist, Ken, who had the perception to give me that chance.

I asked her about the meaning light had for her.

> Well, you will get high on light. You will transcend by lighting and movement, especially that combined. I find that when I'm lighting and going through that process of starting from scratch, the layering that has to go on between lighting a lot and then taking it away, softening it, changing the color on it, or the color temperature, or the angle, or playing with darkness and shadow…You just get a real buzz from it. When it's ready, it really is like a living painting. All the pieces are there that define the space. The light articulates the space and defines the space. Then you are ready with the camera to engage with it and receive that image. The film emulsion just receives that light…and then combine movement with it, and it's going to give you more of an interesting feel.
>
> That's just the start, when you light something. The movement creates different paintings within the one painting that you lit or the one scene that you lit. Then you create many paintings by breaking into the space and then tweaking the lights and changing them a little. It's something that's alive. When it's on, when the lights are on and there is movement and actors catching the light in different ways or the camera moving around a face or seeing…It's totally Zen. There is no moment before or after that counts. It's just the moment that you are in. For somebody who is always very self-aware and self-critical, and all the little voices in my head that we all have that keep us distracted from the moment, that's the only time I truly transcend the self and get out of being an insecure or female ego or whatever.

She went on to answer my questions about light and how she saw interesting contrast, movement, and temperature all around her. She learned the language of light by paying attention to what attracted her. She said keeping a diary of those things allowed a person to build a vocabulary of things they were interested in.

> Then you can apply them later. With cinema, if you have a film shoot and you have a script, then you may start off by reading the script and then ideas come to you. Then other things, you will watch a lot of movies where the lighting approximates the things you have in mind. Or paintings. I always take the director and we look at paintings together. We'll look at Vermeer or something if we are after a natural soft light. We'll find a painting or something that encapsulates the mood of lighting we're looking for.

Over the years, she learned from different assignments. She learned to light and shoot quickly for an after-school special. Working on documentary film, she was able to pick shots that had moments in them, "the process of gathering flowers or gathering shots that somehow say what the documentary is about but are also interesting and wonderful to look at."

She moved into the role of director again with her last film, *Hansel Mieth: Vagabond Photographer* (2003). Hansel was a well-known staff photographer for Life magazine. Sandra described Hansel as similar to her own mother.

> I'm not a strong character like Hansel. I am really passive. She was a real alpha type, really strong, and didn't care what people thought. My mother is like Hansel, exactly like her. She was an immigrant in the same way except that she never found an outlet for her energy and her anger; but they were almost identical.

I asked her what drew her attention to a particular story, just as in lighting she studied things that drew her attention.

> I went for the stories that are the most visual. If she [Hansel] told them to us, you would see them as she told them. For documentaries, I always go for this with subjects, to try and have them tell a story that you see as they speak. So that's one thing, to find the stories that are very visual or dramatic in themselves. For example, when she punches Otto when she thinks that he's married his landlady. It's a great story because you can actually see it. You go along with the story until that moment when she says, "Why?" So, good stories we built in the editing room with footage and with Hansel speaking with her voice. The story is really important.
>
> Then the next thing I choose as a deciding factor is the sound, the rhythm that someone is telling the story with, the voice itself. It's really important. So when I was directing, my one and only short dramatic half-hour narrative, I found I wasn't looking at the performance. I wasn't looking at how sincere they looked

> in their faces. I was totally using my ears. I almost had my eyes closed the whole time. I was just listening to the energy in their delivery, if it felt like it had some, you know what I mean, coming from somewhere…authentic or genuine.

She described the process of transforming raw material "that's just dead" into a projected image on a screen as feeling miserable, painful. She went on to describe the editing process.

> Going through the process of trying stuff and putting things together, and then you just have to keep at it. Then it's good and we can move on. It's very much like painting. You put one mark down. You sit back and look at the mark, and it says to you," I want a green mark next to me." So you satisfy it. So you answer. You start a dialogue with the raw material. That's all you do. You have an idea what this whole thing is supposed to be about, but in the creative moment, you are really having a dialogue with the raw material. It speaks for itself, and you let it speak. So when you are painting in that way, you literally put a mark down. Then a mark needs another mark to keep it company. So it's a very emotional thing. You fall in love with the work that way and you fall in love with the process.

Sandra talked about working with talented editors and the difference between editing and directing.

> They [editors] are working from a sense of timing and pacing that they are good at anyway. You comment, a little bit longer or a little bit shorter, on the pacing; but they have that down. What you do is feed them the images that you want to work with and what's structurally going on. But they do a lot of that. I would say *Hansel* was a complete collaboration between myself and the editor, 50/50.

Like a parent, she felt proud of the final product when she first saw it on the screen. "I felt, 'Wow, it's doing it's job and it doesn't need me anymore.' I felt liberated and proud of it. All the elements were doing their job."

> After talking about her creative process, I asked how she defined voice.
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> I don't think you will find the voice that you may have until you engage in the process. It can be creative writing, painting, cinematography, filmmaking…But I think it has to be two things. It has to have you come into contact with raw materials and ideas or something to find that there's a voice that starts to speak. I don't think it's something, "Oh, what does my voice…Oh, my voice says that I should do this…" I think you have to somehow find your way to some kind of material. It could be a garden, children, or anything. But engaging with

> something outside of yourself, you develop a voice that's a relationship. That's what the voice is. It's a relationship between whatever genetic makeup you have, plus experience, plus need, and something outside yourself coming into contact with each other.

I heard her talking about a sense of self that was more than mind and that the mind might get in the way of voice, so I asked her for clarification.

> Rather than mind, I'd say ego. The mind plays a big part when you are making work. It's mind, thought, and reactions to what you are seeing and feeling, and being able to say, "I feel that way about those two images together. I think we should edit this third one here." So you definitely have mind when you are being creative. But it's the small talk, the monkey-mind that gets in the way.
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> I'm very grateful to have a voice when there is a voice inside of me making decisions. The voice is not dictated by, "What will so and so think? What will make this good?" I love using that voice. I think I use it when I look at student work, too. It's not about me, so I just let it rip and say whatever comes to mind. Sometimes the voice serves me well and it serves them well too. Sometimes it's shy and it doesn't come from anywhere. I think we all should let the voice say whatever it needs to say.
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> Those two things [raw material and voice] have to come together. For the voice to speak, it has to respond to something. Robert DeNiro says he doesn't act. He reacts to the other person. So you put yourself in a situation where you are forced to react, you are forced to have a feeling and the voice will come through…. Or you see something and you respond to it. That's the voice. It's just pure response, but through a medium. Otherwise it stays in your subconscious.

I asked her for an example from her own experience.

> For instance, on this woman that was very moving and she was the main character in this documentary, *Regret to Inform.* She was a 15-year-old, and she had worked as a prostitute in Saigon. There were all these things that had happened to her. Just meeting her first and then illustrating…When I came to light her, I actually lit her with this amber back light with her black, shiny hair. It was just this light. Then I put some very hot pieces of light in a very far background that made her face warm and soft. It was all to do with how I felt, responded to her and her story that dictated the way I lit it.

John Huke

John presented a different view of artistry in the film industry. He, too, was trained as a painter but found his way to film later in his career. His first experience with

film was making props for a movie called *Save the Dog* (1988). His friend, Michael Sullivan, was the set decorator. He was also the set decorator for *Lonesome Dove* (1989*)* and gave John his first job on a film set. He and a crew were assigned to build a buffalo skeleton cast, create 500 buffalo skulls along with various bones for a scene that was later cut from the movie. He progressed from there to positions of art director and production designer with other movies, *Levelland* (2003), *Picnic* (2000), *Lewis & Clark & George* (1997), etc.

John was not able to pinpoint a time when his interest in art blossomed. He remembered going to museums and galleries in Germany. His family was in the military and they lived in Europe and several locations in the United States. He remembered a picture of his grandfather,

> a very serious, imposing Scotsman. He had a portrait done of himself in a kilt and a beret, with a tartan. That portrait was physically larger than I was at about six or seven. I remember vividly looking at it in my grandparent's home. It was a figure of him, Archibald McMillan Wallace. That made an impression. It had sort of a wet feel to the painting. I mean, it was a figure, it was a portrait, but it had a sort of gooey, 'texturey' surface that fascinated me. Another thing that struck me was the light, the way the artist had painted the light on his face. I became a lot more sensitive to light in general. If I was at the beach or if I was in a dark room, I became much more aware of it.

John's first formal art class was in high school and he followed that interest in drawing to college at UT. John explored the use of light in many of his paintings. "So often people are so wrapped up in their paint that they aren't able to pull themselves away and go, 'Oh, this is what other people perceive.' Important thing. Light is what characterizes that. With light you can manipulate tone, nuance, color, everything."

However, he felt the most important lesson he learned with art was the ability to focus and see. "It's visual training. It's not something that everyone gets, but it's

valuable because it's perception." His art teacher, Peter Jenkins, was an important figure in his life. He said he was determined to get an A in his class though Peter had not given an A in 25 years. He did not get his A, but was able to earn an A-, something Peter had not given in 12 years. John was highly motivated to please him. During one marathon six-hour drawing session,

> only about six people still standing in the class, you know. Intense moment. He came up to me and said, "What can you say after you say you're sorry?" And I'm like, "Huh?" It's a final. And then he says, "If you cared half as much about this figure as you do about your mustache, then you might make an artist." (laughing) I had a mustache. But I totally had the rug pulled out from under me. He was telling me, "Pay attention to what you're doing and care as much about your work as you do about the way you look."

Surprisingly, John found himself tearing up as he remembered his teacher and asked me to turn off the tape until he could compose himself. For the remainder of the interview, it was a challenge to explore his experience. He remained professional and focused on the work aspect of production design.

He described what it took to be an artist—perseverance, hard work. "No one is going to tell you that [your work] is fabulous until months, years later. When they finally recognize it. You have to really be cognizant of the process, both mentally and physically. It's process oriented." He described his discipline of going to his studio each day and painting. At times he painted a specific image, at others there was a discovery process. He compared the similarities of painting and the filmmaking process—you could explore for a period of time, but at some point you had to commit to an idea. But even then, because things were always changing, you could never predict the final outcome. Openness was critical to the process.

He described the films as the result of a collaborative chemistry. Due to the amount of time spent together working on a film during production, a crew became close friends and often worked together in a variety of films. Trust was an essential element among the director, production designer, and director of photography (DP). Each was responsible for a creative element of the film. The director was responsible for the vision. The DP was responsible for the camera and light. The production designer coordinated the frame, i.e. the color of the wardrobe, backdrop, props, the color of the actor's hair, etc.

He learned his craft on the job. He found a mentor in production designer, Peter Jamison. They worked together for about five years. From Peter, he also learned the politics of when to speak and how to work with a storyboard. His role in bringing a frame to life involved:

> You read the script and try to figure out who the people are. Joe or Sally or whomever. Where do they live, what do they have around them? Are they cluttery people? Are they fastidious? It's totally character driven. And then based on the script and what the character does within the story, whether they murder someone or they become Ghandi, you try to imagine the context that they would create. I've done three movies of people that live in trailers, that seems to be in vogue in the last few years, and what kinds of interiors would trailers have? Of course we do research. We're trying to conceive of an environment based on the personality. The character. Which is fascinating because how do people live? It's back to a psychological experience. It has to do with class issues and all kinds of stuff. Is it a rich woman, a poor woman? It's all the possible scenarios.

I wondered how he stepped out of creating a stereotypical person. He told me he added elements that created a particular character, like a certain kind of collection that would add a different element to her nature, a clue as to what was to unfold later in the picture. Throughout his description of creating a context for the characters he used the metaphor of sculpting a collaborative set.

The design phase involved developing agreement among different departments. However, the pressure of the production phase was intense. The script was the blueprint, but the collaboration between everyone involved was itself an ever changing, alive process.

> Your life is the film. You're living it in every scene and every day your moving through this story. I worked 20-hour days for seven weeks. But the story is rarely shot in sequence. You might be telling the ending on the first day and the beginning on the last day. Or any combination in between. So it's not like an arc, it's more like every scene becomes its own. It's incredibly grueling and completely different.
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> When you're in the process of it, they own you. And there's absolutely no excuse for not having it as good as you can. And there's 20 other people or 100 other people that want your job. That kind of goes to the fear factor which I've touched on.
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> The fear of failure or the fear of forgetting something is key. I make myself ask questions over and over to make sure we're on the same page. There's so much money going into every minute, like $1000/minute. So if they have to wait for something, that's death.

This phase of the creative process involved crisis management and problem-solving, putting out fires. Once the crew started shooting, his job was essentially done unless they moved locations or tweaked the story. He gave the example of working on a movie set in 1955 and two weeks before shooting started, they changed the time period to 1969. Everything on the set had to be redone. John attributed his flexibility to change as due to his life growing up in the military.

As we moved the interview to his experience of voice, John denied a belief in something like voice or a purpose. " I'm not sure I would say that I have a voice or a purpose. Honestly I think that's a little superficial. I don't think you can fit that in a sentence." I asked him to explore his process of painting the unfolding process he described earlier. We specifically looked at a painting that was next to him in the studio, an abstract picture of his two sons. He said it started out with the whole series about

relationship. As he painted the two images, one son's dilemma, a demon, began to emerge. I asked him to talk about what he wanted to portray in that process.

> It's interesting. That's a good question. The answer is, it's more for me. I'm not out there to do it for someone else, I do it for me. Maybe it's my diary, I don't know. It's a visual dialogue. I'm not working for anyone else when I paint. That's my time. And you know, it's also, it helps me understand what I'm doing. I mean this. I could have never started out to make this painting. I knew it was something about Jared and Graham. That's where this started. I had no idea about the demon until way late in the process. I don't have a vision, voice. I don't have anything to say to anyone else, other than, you know, off camera (laughs). The process is all important. Living well is the best revenge.

I asked John to describe his experience during the moment of discovery as he painted.

> It's just letting yourself be open enough for…it's like I make myself work. I said that artists work and so I have studio time. So I work, often in the morning and I try to log a certain amount of time. And in that time, I just am a receptor. I'm like, open the shutters and go. But I have things, paint and brushes and music. Usually I'm doing stuff. I don't know what I'm doing, I'm just doing something, and then all of a sudden it goes, "bonk," "Oh, here's what you're doing," and I follow that. It's a path, it goes. It's like a meditation in a lot of ways. It's the same really. You know that opening, numbing to thought is where I try to go and then that's when it all kind of rushes in. I don't have any expectations. Zero. Except process.

John described himself as a spiritual person, not a religious one. He felt his relationships, especially his family, defined him. In the recent past, he had become more selective about the movies he chose to work on. And, he had developed a few film scripts, hoping to produce them. He said he had slowed down, and he was having more fun.

John Frick

John Frick was also an art director and production designer. His recent movie credits included *Spy Kids2: The Island of Lost Dreams* (Rodriguez, dir., 2002), *Passionada* (Ireland, dir., 2003), *The Quiet* (Babbit, dir., 2005), and *How To Eat Fried*

Worms (Dolman, dir., 2006). In addition to training as an artist, John completed a degree in architecture from the University of Houston.

John saw himself as an artist from a very young age. He grew up on a Navajo reservation in Arizona. His family owned the trading post started by his grandfather. His father was a Navajo code talker during World War II and met his mother in Australia. John was born in 1947 and described his playground as the wide open spaces of the Navajo reservation. His appreciation of the natural landscape and the spiritual quality of the Navajo lifestyle was reflected in his stories of his youth. Drawing was just one of the ways he entertained himself. The only boy of four siblings, he often played alone in the landscape of the area.

> It was a really great place to grow up as a kid. I had the sense of that place as very deeply spiritual…. That area around there was sandstone, so there were huge sandstone cliffs where you could take a piece of flint rock and actually carve right into it. So I'd make hand and footholds and I would just climb straight up a cliff, get to some cave up there, and then I'd have a scary time getting back down. It was always easier to climb. Just dumb kid stuff. I wasn't aware of the dangers sometimes.
>
> I really just loved the light and how those sandstones would go from sort of pink early on in the day to, as the day grew to afternoon, they would turn sort of a crimson color. At the time, I didn't really think that's what it was; but looking back on it now, I see a lot of it had to do with just being in a place that changed seasons and changed even during the day, going into those box canyons where there was an echo. You could just yell and you could hear your name reverberate inside a box canyon.…. Then in the wintertime, there is this incredible, beautiful snow, with the silence of that. Then going out at night when there is that first freeze and the top layer of snow crunches as you walk on it. It was a very sensory kind of experience with sounds and sights…. It doesn't sound like much, but in a way it all, over time, just kind of made me who I am today and how I appreciate nature from having been a part of it as a kid.

Throughout the interview, John described his early experiences of watching the colors and the play of light on the cliffs behind their home, the sense of weather carving out the cliffs over time, and the feeling of intimacy with the seasonal changes.

John also observed the Navajo culture as the people passed through his parent's store. He said they did not have telephones or any modern form of communication like televisions, yet everyone would show up at the store about the same time and spend the day visiting around the pot bellied stove. As a young boy, he often drew caricatures of the people he saw. Most of the stories he told me were simple observations of cultural differences, such as the way a Navajo person would point with his lips indicating he wanted to purchase a canned item (pointing with the finger was taboo), pay for the item, and then indicate another item he wished to purchase and pay for it before selecting another item. He also described dangerous incidents when people would start drinking, break into an argument, and start brandishing knives.

He described trusting his own form of knowing or intuition as a way to guide him and keep him out of danger.

> I think one of the most important things that people can have is their own intuition. That's hard for a lot of men, in particular. They are not used to following that gut instinct and all that. So that's the thing that I've found for myself, is just being able to sort of tap into my own sort of instinctual edges and revelations and recognize them for something that's an answer and not a question.

When he was a boy, John knew he wanted to work in film. He saw his first film shot near their store. *The Big Carnival* was a Billy Wilder film starring Kirk Douglas. John described watching the production company building the set and playing on it after the movie was finished. When he was in high school, he and a friend were hired as extras in a movie, *Hallelujah Trail*, starring Burt Lancaster.

> One of the jobs we had was to open the huge gates of this fort because Burt Lancaster and all the troops were being chased by Indians and were rushing up to the fort. He and I could not get the door open. It was all on camera and they were yelling, "Cut! Cut!" I was afraid that Burt Lancaster was going to come crashing into the gate there.

John's move into film was a slow progression. He switched from art to architecture in college due to his father's urging. His first wife was a graphic artist and they met production artists in Houston. He worked with a few production projects as an architect, doing space planning and renderings. John moved to Austin in the 1980s when the oil crash hit Houston. He focused on set design and built his business.

> Basically the process is, you're given a script and then once you read that, then sometimes it's spelled out exactly what these sets should look like. I usually do a break down of what kinds of sets and how many sets and things that might be built versus a found location and all. Then you interpret the script into a visual thing, a three-dimensional set from just the words.
>
> Every project is different, and yet there is something that is a thread that goes through all of them. It's almost like you develop a sort of language of film and of communicating about film.

He described the evolving process of set design. He gave an example of working with the director, Robert Rodriguez on *Spy Kids2,* showing me the different levels of details from the initial rough sketch of the tree house to the detailed floor plans that were given to the art department to construct. Design for some sets were a matter of locating an existing house or building while other sets, like with *Lonesome Dove*, required building an entire town.

John emphasized the collaborative effort required on a set. His work as a production designer required close collaboration with the cinematographer on color and lighting. The art department provided "practical lighting" like lamps or candlelight, while the cinematographer augmented the lighting. The color palette determined the mood of the film, which changed throughout a movie. "So maybe someone is having an awful life that's very depressing, so you have darker colors. Then as they meet someone or their situation changes, we can start adding a little more color and making it brighter. It's a subtle thing."

I asked John about the sources of inspiration for his work. He described movies as one important source.

> From the time I was ten, I would catch the greyhound bus and go into Gallop and see movies. I would sometimes sit through two or three, and I'd watch everything about them. There is something about sitting there in the dark looking at this huge screen of this story unfolding. I think it's why movies are still being made is because it affects people deeply and emotionally. You really get into the story. The hardest guy may sit there and bawl like a baby at some movie. So it really does touch a certain place in people.

There was a poetic feel to his words as he described other sources of inspiration.

> My enjoyment has always been appreciation of beauty, culture, people, and just the built environment as well as the natural environment, how it all fits together. When I was in architecture school, I can't remember who said it exactly. They said the space in between buildings is just as important as the buildings themselves. Growing up on the Navajo Reservation, I appreciate wide-open spaces.

John's work highlighted the blend of creativity and business acumen required for success in the industry. In addition to designing a set that met the needs of the script, he developed the budget and hired the crew to build the set. When I asked about his role in bringing a set to life, he also referred to the sculpture metaphor.

> A lot of it is a process of elimination. Once you open up your mind to thinking about a set, or just the overall film, then you start breaking it down so that everything fits together. So you have to look at each set as a separate little project…. So each set is kind of it's own little creative process…. To come up with a concept or the final look of something, you work with your team, you listen to the director, you read the script again.
>
> It's like building a sculpture, and you keep molding it and keep messing with it until…the final thing is like a lot of stuff in life. It's that instinctive thing that just hits you in your gut. It's like, "Okay, this is it. This is right."

John also gave an example of the role serendipity played in the creative process. He was working on a television show in Houston that had a big chase scene through a warehouse. He said they looked and looked, but were unable to find the right warehouse.

> I was off on my own one day. I think [the scene] was going to be shot the next day. I happened to be driving out by the San Jacinto Monument and I saw this old ship that was being towed to Japan for salvage. It was just this old rusty hulk. I thought, "Wow, that would be pretty cool to have them chase all through this old ship rather than through a warehouse." So I mentioned that to the director and we found out how we could get on board. It was a great set. The camera was in these tight places and then you had these little round portholes with rust everywhere. It was far more visually interesting and kind of scary because of the narrow passage. So it ended up being a very interesting location that was just pure serendipity.

He continued to describe a progression of experiences that led to his development in his profession as well as his trust in his own creativity. When I asked how he defined voice he talked about his decision to begin writing and felt he would find his voice through that medium.

> If there is a voice at all, I think it will come out of my writing more than the production design I've done. Also photography. I really love capturing an image that's something I see. So to me, I think a voice is something more visual than it is a voice. I think I have that need to leave some legacy, some body of work, something that adds to the human condition; and whether it's writing a movie that really makes some changes or that affects people profoundly or whatever. There is some voice in me that has to be expressed, yes.
>
> As I was writing my script, because of my production design experience, I was actually seeing more than I was writing. I know a lot of it had to come from being a designer. "If I were to read this script, how would I interpret this? What would I do here?" And as I was writing, I was actually seeing these completed sets. So that's what I mean. My thought processes were from the written word. I can kind of see a visual, I have a visual sense of completion of something that I'm working on.
>
> The script is of our family life. It's my recollection of what it was like to live back there on our trading post. It's not a documentary about my family. It's more of a story.

John's description captured an integrated quality of experience and expression.

Andrew Garisson

Andy Garrison was an award-winning independent filmmaker with both documentary and dramatic film background. He wrote and directed *The Wilgus Stories*

(2000). He was a cinematographer for a documentary film group, Appalshop, in Kentucky and his work included *Fast Food Women* (Anne Lewis, dir., 1991) and *Chemical Valley* (Anne Lewis & Mimi Pickering, dir., 1991). In his interview, he described working freelance doing editing, sound production, and mixer/recordist. He was working as an assistant professor at The University of Texas at Austin and had several projects in process, including his East Austin student film project and a film project documenting a group of Houston artists who were using their work to transform and revitalize a two-block area of abandoned houses in the Third Ward.

Andy started the interview by defining his concept of artist. He saw the term referring to "someone who is taking on the task of following their instincts, their creativity, and exploring that in lots of different ways. It depends on the person." He said he grew up around artists and felt artistry was celebrated in his family. At the same time, his parents discouraged him from pursuing an art career, urging him to be a doctor. His best friend was an early influence on him. He felt his friend was talented at sculpting and painting. Since he thought he was not as good as his friend, he chose to get into photography. He said he never had any formal instruction, he would read books and try things on his own. He went to college during a period of social unrest. The civil rights movement and the Vietnam War were concerns. The portable video camera was newly invented and he felt he could use film to affect change.

He watched TV documentaries depicting the civil rights movement and remembered having the feeling, "Oh, I could do this." During college, he and a friend developed several projects including a video news magazine. After college, he found jobs did not exist in the areas he was interested in, i.e. working with communities doing

video or teaching video in schools. But he was having a conversation with a friend one day, talking about their plans, and he said, "I'd like to make a political art collective and live with a bunch of people in a house." His friend told him they were going to create a media collective in Dayton, Ohio and invited him to join them. Seven people pooled their money, bought a house, and called their group the Dayton Community Media Collective.

It was a creative time. Andy taught photography at the Dayton Art Institute, had a radio show with two other friends, made radio documentaries, and worked on films. They trained students and developed a series of neighborhood based media projects. Over time, Andy said the dogmatic rhetoric led him to separate from the group. Though he credited the group as "a pressure cooker of ideas," he said it was also a place where he prevented himself from trying new things. It was a form of art school. He decided he did not have to restrict art to a political forum but defined his own belief that the "act of creating was not isolated from politics but when you engaged in it forthrightly, things happened that were useful and good." His regret for holding himself back from exploring ideas informed how he later taught and encouraged new filmmakers.

Andy said the most important lesson he learned during that time was how to work. The process of initiating a project and following it through to completion "was a revelation." He described the difference between working at a job and completing a project. He learned to deal with his frustration, identify where he became bogged down and how to get past it, and how to proceed. Making things, turning project ideas and visual ideas into completed images or films, going through the self-doubt and elation,

putting one foot in front of the other, getting the audience feedback—were important steps to establishing his own voice.

His next major transition was working for Appalshop in Kentucky. He was the cinematographer for other people's documentaries. While working with Appalshop, he overcame many assumptions and stereotypes as he was invited into people's homes. One person he described as the most influential, lived in the area.

> Earl was a friend of mine. He's passed away. He is someone who I actually started doing a film about and Earl is very much an inspiration because he was someone who lived his life the way he wanted to live it. He lived in a very small community but he was very different, but an essential part of the community. I think there was a time in his life when it was really crushing for him not to have community approval, and then he figured it out. For him, that was partly about religious faith. That faith gave him the ability to not listen to the judgments of his neighbors and to allow him to keep on doing things that were useful and worthwhile for the community. He was the choir director and he played piano for several different churches and he took kids up in the woods and showed them, "You can eat this, you can't eat that," and played with them. He was always playing. I think I admire people who strive for understanding of how to live life and I think, for Earl, he found it through religion. That doesn't entirely do it for me. But partly the notion that we are connected to something much bigger than what we understand is very clear to me, that there is more going on than we think is going on.

He met Earl through a friend. Earl lived in a little row of company houses.

> It had tin signs covering up holes and there was a sleeping dog on the porch. We knocked on this door and he had obviously been taking a nap. This kind of sleepy black man opens the door a crack and pushes back his hair. It was wild. He had a nose stud and earrings and he was wearing this brilliant multi-colored dashiki, and he said, "Come on in. Come on in." He's this musician, this incredible blues musician, that turned to Gospel. He lived with community disapproval on a lot of different levels. He's this gay black guy who at the same time served these very important functions within that community. He's the person who provides music on Sundays, teaches other people to sing, does religious pageants with the kids, and has parties. The women had no problem with him. But some of the men did. And yet he figured it out. He didn't leave, he didn't quit, and he didn't go away. He said, "You know, I don't worry about their judgment." And I admire that he continued to do what he thought was important and also trusted that life would be all right.

Andy explored his own sense of feeling like an outsider. He said he grew up with a family secret. His parents told him to never reveal that he was half Jewish, half Italian. His father and grandparents were not practicing Jews, but he said it was a hidden thing. He always felt like an outsider, with Jewish or non-Jewish friends. His deep admiration for Earl's self-acceptance and subsequent community acceptance brought him closer to his own sense of self-acceptance.

His experience with Appalshop helped Andy discover more than personal awareness. He decided he wanted to explore fiction. The result was he wrote and directed *The Wilgus Stories.*

As we discussed three important turning points in his life, Andy remembered an image he had when he was about 29 or 30 years old.

> Sparks were flying from my fingertips. That was the image I carried around. I wrote about it. I drew pictures of it. I felt stagnant. I was trying to get stuff out of myself and I couldn't. I knew if I could just figure out what I needed to do I'd get the stuff out of my hands and, it would just like, whoosh, and energy would pour out of me. It took several years with that image.

The second turning point involved reading *Letter to a Young Poet* by Rilke. He said it was a book an artist friend gave him about a young artist trying to find his voice. He remembered a particular passage,

> It said something to the affect that when you create a work of art, you're creating an obligation. Because what you're creating, you are giving life to. And if you're going to have it be whole and to live, you've got to bring it forth in a way that makes it whole, that doesn't cripple it as it comes out. You've got to really give it the attention and respect and work that it deserves. If you hold back from doing that, you'll cripple it and then you'll have this thing for the rest of your life that's a burden. It's crippled. It is itself incapable because you've done this to it. That was actually pretty interesting to think about the work as a living thing and that you're giving birth to it essentially.

The third important point was examining what it meant to be a prolific writer. He called himself a late bloomer and compared himself to those artists that were doing wild and crazy, wonderful things. His decision to be a husband and father, to have a family and be a teacher, made it hard for him to devote time to his art. He wanted to continue to feed his own creative flame but felt he was still trying to figure out how to do that. He was working to explore how to be both an artist, a member of a community, and have a family.

Andy had clearly thought about the term, voice, over the years. As a teacher, he told students to find what attracted them. "It's finding this rich vein of stuff that you know how to extract and shape and put out in the world." When I asked how he could identify voice, he said,

> Well, what's not voice to me are fashion and style choices. I think people need to try things out that they've seen and experiment with it. But you look at work and you say, "Oh, that's just like so-and-so's." "Oh yeah, that's right." I don't think fashion or style are particularly a part of voice but I think that's something you pass through. But I think when you manage to find that original quality in your own voice, what you're finding is your way of interpreting in a somewhat original way this thing you're doing. It may include qualities that you've seen. It has to. It includes qualities that you see around you. I keep saying, 'see,' but I don't think it's just see. So that's having understanding for a lot of different things you hear, you grab hold of, you sense. It's like when you see it, you get it. When you see someone who has presented to you something that makes you go, "Oh, that's the voice. That's the voice that's speaking finally."
>
> There's a thing that I have always been attracted to related to the idea of voice, which is like a mystic Kabalistic concept of the voice. And the voice is not the voice of God, because we're too far away from it. But they talk about the daughter of the voice. And it's so faint. It's happening in the background. If you listen really carefully, if you're really lucky, you'll hear the voice. I think that's a beautiful metaphor for voice, for voice coming through us. If you hear it, I think part of it is hearing; when you hear your own voice, I think that's what you're tuning into as well. It's not just yours. I mean, it is, but it's something bigger too. The things that I have done that are the best embody that. If someone else has done something that embodies that, I'll see it and I'll feel like I know them. There's a connection.

As Andy described his newest idea for a movie about boxing to exemplify connections and voice, he talked about the role of art in his life. "Art is a way for me to explore things. And in the making of things, I understand things better."

Stephen Harrigan

Steve Harrigan wrote screenplays (*Moonwalker*) and taught screenwriting at the Michener Center at the University of Texas at Austin. However, he was best known for his books, *Aransas, Jacobs Well*, and *Gates of the Alamo.* He wrote articles for a number of magazines including Rolling Stone, The Atlantic Monthly, Esquire, and the Texas Observer. He became a regular writer for Texas Monthly and co-founded a journal of poetry called Lucille. The focus of much of his work, books and articles, was man's relationship with nature.

Steve hesitated to use the word art to describe his work, preferring to call himself a writer. He decided he wanted to write when he was in grade school and over his school years found himself reading biographies of writers. He found writing helped create an identity. During high school and college he said he adopted the pose of a writer but had difficulty finding a format he enjoyed. Poetry was the easiest for him and later, after he graduated, he decided he could write articles for magazines. He completed his first novel in 1980 (*Aransas)*. During those early years of writing, he identified his weakness was doing the serious reporting that was valued by magazines and newspapers. He began to focus on his ability to "watch people and describe them and describe situations, so my journalism inevitably shifted to a more essay format."

Steve found himself dissatisfied with the transient quality of magazine articles. He felt frustrated because he wanted to explore more universal or timeless pieces. He was drawn to writing articles about nature and began to "push the envelope," developing an article from the perspective of animals as they observed people. Thus began his transition to bringing more of his authentic interest and enthusiasm to his work.

As we talked about the idea of eternal themes that he wanted to examine, he described a fascination with things that were

> out of reach, things that are barely visible or beyond the range of our perception. I am trying to break through to some other realm, maybe left over from that childhood consciousness when everything was so vibrating and real. So there is a kind of quest, a search for some different dimension, not necessarily a religious quest because that seems a little boring to me, but something not unlike that.

He continued to explore breaking through different realms in his novels. We discussed how his books continued that theme with the presence of water and the characters including sea life residing beneath the surface.

He started writing scripts in 1984 and sold his first screenplay (*Moonwalker*). The thought, "Oh, I can write a screenplay," was the deciding moment that led to taking that direction. His turning points were more like points on a continuum rather than dramatic changes. The challenge he found with movies was the lack of control over the final product. "You are never the sole creator of a movie, so I need to be that. I need there to be some place in my life where I'm the guy who calls all the shots. Fiction is what does that for me, or books."

We talked about the interrelationship of the author and the characters of a story, how they reflected the author's emergent perspective. He used an example of his novel, *Gates of the Alamo*, to describe the process.

> I wasn't sure that I was consciously aware of what I wanted to do. I knew that this was material that was deeply meaningful and moving to me in some fashion and I was very much aware of what I didn't want to do which was the same old thing, the kind of classic mythologized Alamo story. When I started this book one of the interesting things was there weren't, except for a few books here and there, there were no novels about the Alamo. There was no really ambitious historical novel that tried to wrestle with this story on an emotional level. I thought that was an interesting way to approach it, to tell the story in a way that made the reader feel like they were actually there and that pulled no punches about the violence or the complicated political situation, to ignore the mythology, and just get in on the ground floor of reality.
>
> I knew that to do that I needed characters that I dress myself in, that I could understand their motivations. So those characters gradually occurred to me. I knew that I needed to tell the story from their points of view so I needed multiple characters because there were a lot of things to see. Then the more that I read about the real story, I would read about a particular character and think, "Hmmm, there are traits of this guy that I could use to try and get into the story." The main character of the book is a botanist, which is about the last kind of person that you would expect for this heroic story, but I am not a particularly heroic guy and I thought, "I can understand this guy." I knew a little bit about natural history and what Texas was like in 1836 and I had done some reading about botanists in that time and naturalists and I thought, "This is interesting. I can see this through a completely different lens. Nobody expects to go into this story through the eyes of a botanist." So I just sort of looked for opportunities like that that were kind of unexploited and unclichéd.

Steve described contacting historians and reading documents to develop his own understanding of events during the Texas revolution. He also talked about the importance of muddling through the learning process and getting comfortable with the frustration of learning to create. The idea of rules for learning could be helpful, he felt, but also deadening and confining.

> There is this fog that you have to work your way through and with every step that you take the fog dispels itself a little bit. But if you wait until you are ready [to write] then you will never be ready. There is a time when you just have to throw yourself into it and get to know the people that you are writing about. As they reveal themselves to you or as you reveal them to yourself, you understand what it is that they want and what they are in the book for. Once you understand what a character is after, what he or she is trying to achieve in life, then you have a story.
>
> I mean the character has to be intimate with you in some way, but you have to put yourself in the world that you want them to inhabit.

When I asked Steve to talk about early memories from his childhood, he described events involving nature: (a) an elephant named Jude at the Oklahoma City Zoo where he grew up. "We would feed her peanuts through the chain linked fence and she put them in her trunk," (b) "I remember standing on a little pier that went out over the water and there were ripples in the water moving under the pier so it seemed like the pier was moving. I've never forgotten that memory. I didn't understand how we were moving," and (c) "I remember my grandfather taking my brother and me to a lake that had dried up or drained. We were walking on the bottom of this dried lake. There were old tires and cans. I remember trying to process how we could be…this was supposed to be underwater, but we were walking along the bottom of it." Steve described these experiences as mysteries that led him to be intrigued by the "unknowable." He talked again about his pull to understand what was beneath the veil.

I asked him to define voice and he responded:

> Well, you know it when you read it. If a writer has a voice, then I think that they have a personality. You pick up a book by somebody and you start reading and you see that person. It could be totally in the head of the character that that writer has made up, but you understand that this writer is a particular person with a particular set of perceptions and a style, a way of expressing him or herself that may not be totally unique, but is unique enough and the voice is something that interests you by the writing itself, not necessarily by the story; although its hard to tell where one picks up and the other leaves off. Just the choice of words, the rhythms, there is something being communicated, and you are aware of it when you see it. If you have one, then you are a writer. If you don't have one, then you will never be a writer. That's what makes people want to read you, the sense that you are there, that you are present in the story.

Authority and power—the power of observation, the power of thought, a coherent mindset that comes through—were the qualities he ascribed to voice. He believed those qualities could be developed over time. But also developing trust in one's judgment was essential for voice.

Carolyn Pfeiffer

Carolyn had an extensive film production career. Most recently, she was president and CEO of Burnt Orange Productions in Austin, Texas. The goal of Burnt Orange Productions was to produce three films a year, while working with the University of Texas Film Institute to train film students. Her first production piece was Alice Cooper's *Welcome To My Nightmare* (1975). Her long list of movie credits included: *The Moderns* (1988), *A Time of Destiny* (1988), and *Cool As Ice* (1991).

She was involved with the making of movies from the beginning of her career at age 20. She went to Europe and taught English to Italian Air Force Officers. There she met her fiancé and began translating movie scripts for people in the Italian film industry. Her fiancé's family included many of the great Italian filmmakers and she was immersed in the rich environment of cinematic artistry. She worked on Fellini's 8 ½, Visconti's *The Leopard,* and Blake Edward's *The Pink Panther*. While in Italy and later in France, she worked with famous actors and directors.

> I was around extraordinary, creative people, like the greatest costume designers in the world. I was going to the houses of the great Parisian designers with the actresses I worked for, and in the movie business I was going to the great Italian costume houses and the one in London as well, those are the two great houses. Then I was observing great cinematographers. So there was this osmosis process that was happening, there were standards that I was observing that to me were standards with which you worked.

When she later moved to London, she started a public relations firm and, for eight years, represented many well-know actors, like Robert Redford, Liza Minelli, Francois Truffaut, Steve McQueen, and Apple Corp. (of Beatles' fame) as well as Paul McCartney and Wings. In 1975, she returned to the United States and worked with Shep Gordon of Alive Productions. She began producing movies. Her ability to develop an extensive

network of relationships and a depth of understanding of the aesthetics of moviemaking prepared her for her present venture of producing independent films and training film students.

She described for me the aesthetic layering of voices during the filmmaking process. "It really is a mosaic." The producer's key role was the business side of making movies. They were responsible for financing, budgets, negotiations with hiring people, and problem solving. Their decisions impacted every department involved. The collaborative process came alive as she described the break down of departments and everyone's roles in acquiring scripts, creating a vision for a film, designing and building each scene, coordinating the props and wardrobe of each character, lighting and shooting the different shots, and editing together the final version.

> We find a script that we like…. So the beginnings of a vision start with the writers and the director. Then we meet with them and we know what we can spend or what we are going to try to raise to spend, so we know the parameters of the budget. That dictates the number of days we can shoot, and a number of budgets for different departments, which will dictate what they have to spend. So once all that is determined, then within that framework you start to fill the boxes, or to fill the canvas.

Throughout the pre-production and production process, the creative process was an ever-changing kaleidoscope and she saw her role as harmonizing those forces in the service of the film vision.

I heard the beginnings of her role as producer emerging as she returned to the states and joined Alive Enterprises. She first started working with writers, representing them and

> hearing everything—writers, directors, actors, and indeed producers—hearing everything from their point of view, but also saying, "Now I wonder what I think about this and how would I see this happening?" So that's when I first started

> producing and making choices of the material that I was comfortable producing, thinking about how I could set up, pitch, sell, and so forth.

Her developmental process was an unintended journey from following a passion for adventure and a desire to see Europe to running a production company.

> Movie making wasn't even in my mind until I went to Europe. And then I ended up in the movie business and it was just a long process because I actually was enjoying what I was doing and I wasn't driven to do more than what I was doing. I was sort of going through my process. And then I reached a certain point when I realized that I knew quite a lot and I actually could do it. Then I continued to learn on every single show that I worked on. You never stop learning, which is one of the reasons that this business is fun.

Like other artists, choices she made conveyed where her particular interests lay. The selection of scripts was a window to her voice. She described what attracted her, the quality of writing, a unique idea—one that was different and unpredictable—and kept her looking forward to turning the page. The stories were human stories best told in an independent film format. The emotional image was the thread weaving together the elements and the particular emotion was not important.

> It could be fear, sympathy, laughter, anything. In a really well-executed film, the layers are subtle. I mean, look, I love beautiful things. I mean I love great looking movies, I love stylish movies, I love well-photographed ones, I love moving cameras. I love films that are craft-wise extremely well-crafted and I'm a great admirer, I understand the contributions of those departments. But in the end, if it doesn't work emotionally, you have a failed piece. But if it works emotionally and the rest is a little crude, you have a successful piece. The marriage of those two things is what usually makes for something very exceptional.

She talked about attending to her gut reaction when making choices. "Basically you're working off the instincts of the writers, the director, the actors, and you're dealing in a certain kind of what you would call truths." Developing her personal taste was an organic process. "It also can evolve through education and exposure. I point out to a

student or students of life, when their eyes are wide open, what constitutes beauty, drama, comedy, what makes things successful, how to look at things."

I sensed the message she conveyed to her students reflected her own early experiences growing up. She was born in Washington, D.C. and her family moved to Madison, North Carolina when she was six years old. Her mother had grown up in Madison, so she had a large extended family there. She adored her maternal grandparents, particularly her grandfather. She said he was a horse and mule dealer and trainer, and came from a family of horse dealers. The women of her family worked and were professionals, like nurses.

She described early memories of riding horses. She and her friends would roam the countryside exploring different small towns near their home. They had a great deal of freedom because the times were safe for children. She said she felt blessed to come from a happy family and she grew up feeling very grounded and "quite fearless."

Over the years, she experienced deep loss with the death of her younger brother and her husband. She said she dealt with those experiences by re-inventing herself. She felt that the pain of those losses remained deep within her, but felt blessed to have a positive nature and the ability to see good in every situation. "I continue to be filled with curiosity and enthusiasm for things. Almost every day I wake up and I'm happy to see the day coming. So that, I think, is my blessing in life, and that is what more than anything else has allowed me to weather sadness."

I asked her to define voice and she said, "Well, to me, someone's voice is how they express their gift." I also asked her to describe her own voice.

> I have a confidence in spotting certain kinds of talent in film, in film in general, and in all disciplines in general…. Not everyone develops at the same time, but

> you have your nose for people that you know have something special, whether they have all the other qualities that will take them to a degree of success—because it takes more than just talent. It takes perseverance, it takes belief in yourself, it takes all kinds of things….
>
> The common thread in my work, I think, is I'm always concerned about the aesthetic. So I always feel quite proud that my films look good…. I think, if you put all my pictures up, they are diverse, but they all look good. They're well photographed. They're well designed. They have a kind of elegance to them. That's, I think, the commonality.

Summary

I was inspired by each participant's level of vulnerability. I saw their commitment to pursuing a deeper awareness of themselves, humanity, and creativity through their various crafts. Fear was a constant obstacle they faced as they engaged in the process of creating form. Each made a contribution to the larger community while satisfying a need to express.

The personal wisdom they portrayed as they described their artistic journey arose out of their belief in honesty and integrity in their craft. Letting go of the layers of self-judgment and comparison, they discovered a unique inner voice reflected through their art. Many believed the inner voice also expressed a collective voice of humanity and opened the heart to connections.

The Final Chapter?

Chapter 6

This chapter was originally the final chapter as the project was turned in to my dissertation committee. I decided to leave it in as written to give you a context for Chapter 7, the real final chapter. There is information within this chapter that remains important to the project. However, it turned out not to be the final say.

This project began as a personal and scholastic journey of discovery. The quest to experience artistic voice held a sincere desire to connect with a source of wisdom that was both personal and universal. It began with a moment of intuitive insight, back in film history class four years ago. Artistic voice was the solution to an immediate problem—needing a theme to organize a school paper contrasting the study of life from the perspective of film history and psychology. However, I knew it also was the solution to other problems—a personal desire and passion to discover my own artistic voice and thus a subject I could invest time and energy for research.

The goal was to experience Dewey's (1934) concept of aesthetic consciousness and direct experience during the act of creating and expressing. Those words were empty of meaning until I listened to each of the artists interviewed and began to connect their experience with my own. The wisdom of their experiences touched my heart, reminding me of what I already knew. For most of my life, I made the false assumption that artistry was always fluid and almost effortless. Their interviews demonstrated the hard work of mastering their craft and the self-trust acquired through finding their personal authority.

Interestingly, I found each artist shared a sense of uncertainty about their voice and the process of artistry until they developed a sense of authority or trust in the relationship between themselves and something that was beyond language—a common

rhythm within a piece, the heart of a character's story, or an intuitive sense of direction. But the connection was consistent when they learned to let go of barriers such as anxiety and thoughts controlling the effort and allowed the heart of the piece to emerge. The combination of interest, emotion, and context formed the pattern that guided structure and process, for the individual work of art, for the individual artist's life, and for the film community.

I could never capture in words all the rich depth of understanding that evolved within each participant's interview. Ten lives fully lived and described during a two-hour dialogue held far more than the hundreds of books I reviewed for this study. The process of letting go of everything that was not essential to describing the experience of artistic voice felt overwhelming. Thus I selected from each interview the significant moments in their lives, the emotional events that shaped their decisions to pursue their particular path. My hope was to give my readers an experience of artistic voice, to share what it was like for me to listen to their vulnerability and openness as they gave to me what they had been freely given and worked hard to convey through their art—the healing power of human connection.

I started this project believing that I was not an artist. I also wondered if I could call myself a scientist since I strongly questioned many of the assumptions of the research community. Could I challenge existing doctrine defining mainstream science while holding a belief in the beauty of research? Over the four-year process, I found resonance in the stories of artists and scientists as they challenged their personal and cultural assumptions and discovered the strength to express their personal truth. Within their historical contexts, Aristotle, Newton, Galileo, and Descartes, too, were innovators. They

questioned the scientific norms of their time and their assumptions shaped modern culture. However, as I read their original stories, I found their discoveries were often presented in textbooks or research citations without questioning their validity for current context. I found similarities between their struggle for answers and my own, though, giving me the sense of authority I needed to present my scientific view. I could challenge the use of objective language in text, I could justify the inclusion of subjective experience, and I could share the excitement of a growing personal awareness of the meaning of artistry.

However, this project was to explore the dimensions of others' artistic voice. The similarities between their experience and my own was reflected in the selection process.

Dimensions of Artistic Voice

I visualized developmental dimensions as layers rather than a linear path. This dissertation report would be an example of what I mean. The first chapter described a vision of artistic voice as a rain forest. The vision included all the elements, the gestalt of the whole. The second chapter created a framework or structure for qualities of life, human life, and human consciousness. The development of expression arose from the person-in-environment relationship, the formation of language, communication, and feedback. Feedback and refinement of language were building blocks for self-awareness and growing consciousness. Dewey's (1934) idea of art, involved the clarifying and refining process of self-reflection and interaction with form, seeing the reflection of clarified emotion in the completed aesthetic form.

Form played a role in shaping the perspective of the artist. As Gombrich (1960) described, the tool of the artist, whether a pencil or a brush, shaped whether the artist saw in terms of lines or masses. I found that to be true of film artists. The writers' created the unique idea for a story along with the blueprint for bringing it to life. The production designer brought together the elements of the set and the characters' history, creating a context for the story. Cinematographers used light and shadow to create depth and dimensions, contrasts and movement. The actors expressed the characters through personal interpretation and dialogue. The editor was looking for emotional moments that captured mood and built rhythm and pacing. The director was the orchestra conductor, listening to the individual sounds and coordinating them to capture his or her vision of the piece. The producers created the parameters of the project, the limits of budget, time, and personnel; decisions regarding the resources available for form.

Within each discipline, the artists' language stemmed from the tool they used—the storyline, paintbrush, editing machine, camera and lights, dialogue and decision-making. Their past experience, current ideas, and particular perspective informed a collaborative dialogue. The specialized disciplines harmonized their particular aspect of the film then informed the vision of the final piece.

Their tools and the stories they chose to tell also shaped and ordered their own lives. The motivation to create and find their own voice emerged out of their life experiences. Learning their craft, discovering their ability to author a piece, building depth as they opened to their own interests and self-honesty led to choices with sometimes unintended consequences. But each person found meaning of the

consequence within the story of their lives—art within their experience—that became their gift to the greater whole.

Developmental qualities

The key dimension in artistic voice was the aesthetic process. John Dewey (1934) described the aesthetic state as the most intense state of being experienced in the transition from disturbance to harmony. I saw a metaphor for this concept in Ilya Prigogines description of Bénard cells. His discovery of dissipative structures and self-organization (see Chapter 2) resulted from his observation of that phenomenon of thermal convection, a factor found to determine weather conditions, continental drift, and solar activity.

To simplify, Nicolis and Prigogine (1989) described an imaginary layer of water between two horizontal parallel plates. "Left to itself, the fluid will rapidly tend to a homogenous state in which…all its parts will be identical" (p. 9). Homogeneity extended to all properties so temperature, location within the water, etc, would all appear to be the same, a state of equilibrium. But if conditions changed, say someone touched their finger to the plate, "the temperature in this part of the plate will momentarily be modified. An incident like this, called a *perturbation,*…takes place by chance in a system and locally (and generally weak) modifies some of its properties" (p. 10). The weak condition usually died out fairly quickly, however, and the system did not keep track of it. Nicolis and Prigogine (1989) described the various changes that took place within the fluid as the intensity of heat was increased and energy communicated to the system. At a critical

point of intensity, the fluid organized itself into a stable pattern of waves of rotation called Bénard cells. The behavior of the fluid was ordered and harmonized into meaning.

> The most remarkable feature to be stressed in the sudden transition from simple to complex behavior is the *order* and *coherence* of this system…. Everything happens as if each volume element was watching the behavior of its neighbors and was taking it into account so as to play its own role adequately and to participate in the overall pattern. (p. 13).

I imagined Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience as the movement from a state of equilibrium through turbulence to a higher ordered aesthetic state similar to those of Bénard cells. I saw those points of transition in the overall development of artistic voice in the life of the artist and within the individual acts of creating.

For example, Bill Wittliff described identifying and stepping out of the prison he had created (his publishing company) and deciding to pursue his career as a writer. He identified fear of failure as the key obstacle and found the courage to risk discovering whether the fear was real. He tested his assumption and found his love of storytelling opened a whole new reality. He explored his connection with his characters and his writing craft. His decision to pursue his interest in the Mexican vaquero followed awareness that his special appreciation afforded him the unique role of documenting an important historic link. The creative act of writing his first screenplay followed from that decision. His transition to film involved serendipitous events connected with the screenplay. However, his sense of authority guided him to trust himself, allowed him to remain open to opportunities and explore options, while challenging the assumption that he had to live in Hollywood.

So, how do we, as researchers, study or map that transition process? And would it be useful? Within the stories of each of the artists I found a unique path. For example,

unlike Bill's story of events quickly unfolding after his decision to pursue writing, Don Howard's career path evolved at a much slower pace that seemed to meet his needs.

Don, too, faced his fear of failure. He spent a year deliberating about how to invest his time and energy before deciding the fear that he was not good enough was the main obstacle to pursuing filmmaking. He saw his love of filmmaking as the means to honestly connect and communicate with an audience. He made decisions about how he could pursue his craft in a manner that supported his values and saw success as creating films that were windows to a deeper level of understanding of people and culture.

Both of these artists engaged in the aesthetic process. According to Dewey (1934), the aesthetic process began with a human need, reaching into the environment, and encountering obstacles. The turmoil of emotions arising from that challenge was ferment for an aesthetic experience. Dewey believed the clarification process—the ordering of strong emotions with the values and meanings of prior experience—was critical for the transformation of an idea into art. "[O]ur appetites know themselves when they are reflected in the mirror of art, and as they know themselves they are transfigured. Emotion that is distinctly esthetic then occurs" (Dewey, 1934, p. 77).

Each artist's life story was a unique pattern and structure. They chose editing rather than production design or directing. Their path originated from the gift of a brother or the pursuit of adventure. Yet each shared the process of facing their fear, anger, frustration, joy, excitement, or loss. Finding a way to explore and clarify those emotions through their work was the common thread.

How I used this material to explore my own artistic voice was finding similarities with the artists, not breaking their experience into parts and attempting to reconstruct

their efforts within my own form. Before this project, I only saw the differences between my experience and those described by artists. The Aristotelian law of thought, A or not A, shaped my perception of separation. Interviewing a variety of artists led to the discovery that there were degrees of artistic experience. The subtle role of Sandra Adair and John Frick's artistry contrasted with the dramatic voice of Dan Millican or Carolyn Pfeiffer. As I found elements within each experience that I could relate to, I began to open to my own artistic qualities, ones I knew about but never labeled as creative or unique. I found subtle elements and dramatic aspects of my own voice; personal thoughts and feelings that kept me fearful or made me feel bold enough to take risks.

Once I identified with these artists, I studied their paths. The hard work of learning their craft, building relationships, and developing trust in their ability challenged my perception of art as easy or simple for those of true artistry. I could see my own passion for the pursuit of self-awareness as a gift and artistic expression within the act of creating this research. The hard work of crafting the final form built an even stronger connection with each of my participants. As I worked with the creative flow, often feeling frustrated and inadequate, I built a slow confidence born of self-trust and trust in a connection with the source of inspiration and serendipitous experience.

I made the decision to present the portraits of artistic voice rather than an analysis of each interview based on my belief that the parts could not be understood separate from the whole. As I constructed each portrait, I selected items from their interviews that reflected my own recognition of voice or artistry. The goal was to bring each artist to life; for the reader to experience an understanding of artistic voice through the stories of

their lives individually and in concert. Would the reader resonate with their experience? I needed to test that question in another study.

Impact for psychology

Simonton (2000) reviewed the 50-year span of advancement in the scientific study of creativity beginning with J. P. Guilford's 1950 APA address. In his speech, Guilford advocated for greater study of creativity, believing it to be the most important aspect of our humanity. Guilford's own research was constrained by his quantitative scientific method and his project to define elements of creative intelligence was eventually abandoned. Simonton's review reflected the ongoing fragmentation of the scientific community and the slow progress of research based on reductionistic assumptions.

John Dewey (1934), in contrast, studied the whole aesthetic experience described by artists. He distilled the elements around the idea of ordering emotion and creating a clarified idea in form. He found the extremes of flux and action prevented harmonious ordering. Thus the challenge became finding the balance between self-reflection and receptivity on one side and action on the other.

Dewey's (1934) model for aesthetic consciousness, Elbow's (1994) ideas for resonant voice in writing, and Belenky, et al.'s (1986) research on the development of voice were combined with theories of the complex nature of human life and perception to build a structure for artistic voice. This study was a starting point for the dialogue about that model, not the definitive statement. The purpose was to provide a gestalt experience

for the audience, the experience of stepping out of one limiting frame of reference and discovering one that brought the experience of artistic voice to life.

The history of psychology was built upon a false assumption—the separation between mind and body. Ongoing isolation and fragmentation were present in the inner and outer worlds within our culture. Treatments for the resulting symptoms, depression and anxiety, were also focused on the separated mind complex rather than the person-in-environment relationship.

In contrast, the field of artistry maintained the craft tradition and wisdom of aesthetic consciousness found in the unified mind/body interaction with environment. Artists lived in our culture and experienced all the symptoms of depression and anxiety we all face. However, the experience of flow or heightened consciousness found when moments of harmonized elements—mind, body, spirit—came together during the creative act motivated their desire to continue exploring that connection.

This study was a work in progress. My own state of fragmentation became more organized through the development of this project as I discovered how cultural assumptions limited my perception of my own abilities. A greater awareness of internal and external resources generated a heightened sense of intimacy and connection with others and to a source of inspiration—a Source of power received and given. Through dialogue and creation of a generative metaphor, I opened to more of who I was and what I could become. Limiting the study of psychology to the brain or a mind complex continues the existing state of fragmentation and isolation, furthering inaccurate assumptions contradicted by more recent findings in complexity science.

My vision was far more than what could be actualized in this study. This project humbled my spirit and shaped my new perception. I embrace the form that was manifest from the constraints of time and energy. My hope is that it will provide inspiration to those who follow their heart as I was advised to do. The challenge of the undergoing and doing process remains alive within my own experience and will forever inform my future work.

Completing the Circle of Dialogue

Chapter 7

I was carrying my laundry from my apartment to the laundry room, a short walk on an unusually warm day in November, reviewing the events of the morning. I was a doctor now; the dissertation defense completed just hours before. I called everyone I knew to announce my status as Doctor Burnett. My committee members were excited about the project and the results, except for the final chapter. Their feedback reinforced my excitement about what I had discovered; the beauty of finding my own voice was an interactive process, engaging with form and substance. The artists' voices in the study guided the writing of the work—as I explored others' journeys of finding their voices, asking questions and listening openly to their words, selecting and expressing the meaning of their experiences, my voice found expression. Our collective voices in this piece demonstrated the emergent creative process—parts harmonizing into a new whole, on the individual and group level.

But the final chapter was not finished, they said. I had not taken the risk of opening the windows and inviting everyone in to see me naked, at least in that chapter. They wanted me to fully open my heart and show myself.

I had no idea what that meant. I listened to them describe feeling as if everything in the prior chapters pointed in "this" direction, but then I stopped short. I wanted them to tell me what "this" was, but they would not, or could not. They understood the final chapter was written in the last hours before the deadline from a state of complete exhaustion. They were right. What I did not tell them was the fear I held during those last twenty-four hours, approaching the conclusion of the project without an ending, no

inspired thoughts about how to wrap it up, unsure if what I had already said made sense to anyone else. No one else had seen what my committee had just read. This fledgling document determined their decision—had I completed the requirements of an 8 ½ year intense course of study?

I wrote the original version of Chapter 6 in the twenty-four hours before turning it in, deeply asking for that connection to the creative source; opening, opening, opening to whatever thoughts could seep through my exhaustion. I felt grateful for the small insights enabling me to complete the ten pages, but disappointed that the deeper insight still eluded me. I could not read it for another twenty-four hours until I rested, afraid it said nothing. But it was turned in. And I felt somehow let down by that spirit that had carried me through the entire project, disappointed in myself that I had not found the nugget of gold to give my readers.

I had no idea how to take the next step, to bare my soul, to complete the project, as I walked to the laundry room. I had already risked everything for the project. What was left for me to do?

Before rounding the corner of the building, a black and yellow butterfly lifted off the flower nearby and floated around the turn ahead of me. I watched it flying back and forth from tree to tree. My eyes followed it up and noticed what looked like moths lifting up from the nearby trees. But as one flew closer, it had the same yellow-black coloring as the original butterfly. These were baby butterflies! Hundreds of them! As far as I could see upward, they were lifting off and circling above me.

The symbolism was hard to ignore. I stood there, feeling the connection to Nature, allowing the celebration of new life to unfold and emotionally sweep me up into the sky with it. For a brief moment we were one, testing our new wings.

Then I started my laundry.

Taking a Risk

Trust is a hard thing to maintain in relationships. Conflict can easily break its tenuous thread. Yet it is an essential quality for growth in the parent/child relationship, the marital relationship, the therapeutic relationship, the relationship between citizens and government; all relationships. Trust supports the desire to change, to take the risk of stepping into the unknown, and reduces the fear of failure and isolation. Trust exists between people, within the relationship with self, and in relationship with a source of inspiration. It supports connections and commitment.

This project, for me, was a lesson in building trust. Could I genuinely follow my heart and not give up, not give in to limiting expectations, and trust the vision? The final support and push from my dissertation committee was what I needed to fulfill my commitment to testing that relationship. The security they provided reminded me of a scene I once observed: A student actor forgot his lines at a play rehearsal. I observed the director gather the rest of the cast together to support him practicing until the rehearsal could continue. I had expected the director would chastise the actor for not being prepared and was surprised at the result of providing support rather than punishment. The actor quickly learned his lines within the context of safety. I felt as though my committee provided that same support as I approached writing this final chapter.

Opening the heart to complete surrender and trust while stepping into the unknown, curious about what might emerge, what had not yet found language, for me, required that feedback and nurturing care. I was just the instrument, the voice. I had worked for four years to reintegrate my own fragmented mind/body relations, finding the authority to express my experience. Now it was time to test the quality of inner connection and bring this project to life. Would my heart support me as well in that surrender? Could I embrace my fear and enter fully into the state of intimacy, connection, and oneness with the spirit of this project?

I asked those questions of myself then stepped away from writing for a few days. Upon waking this morning I remembered two models for artistic voice. They were gestalt experiences early in the project. I set them aside years ago as I entered the frustrating process of integrating scientific research with models for analyzing my interview data. I searched for them this morning through the file drawers full of notes and copies of articles. I remembered earlier feelings of being overwhelmed with the weight of trying to synthesize everything and felt relief that I had let go of the old paradigm and found a new paradigm for studying creativity.

The models were at the very back of the piles. After reviewing them, I realized those models were the blueprints of my own journey. I provide the context for them here and describe them more fully. The first model is a generative metaphor for the developmental process of voice—the discovery of the language of volcanoes and how they became expressive. The second model is a map for artistic voice in the moment of expression.

Developmental Voice as Volcano

I watched a PBS Nova program, *Volcano's Deadly Warning*, and was deeply excited about Bernard Chouet's discovery of the language of volcanos.

> Bernard Chouet is a good listener. A volcano seismologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's Volcano Hazards Team in Menlo Park, California, Chouet spent years patiently lending an ear to strange seismic resonance coming from volcanoes. In time he learned how these sounds could signal a dangerous rise in pressure as magma welling up from deep within the Earth tried to find its way out; if it didn't, the volcano eventually blew (PBS, 2002).

Chouet talked about his realization that the Earth was alive and his discovery of how the rise of magma through the crevices of the mountain left seismic signatures. He described how he learned to read the seismic data of a volcano and distinguish between an A-type and a B-type event.

> Unlike the A-type event, which reflects the brittle failure of rock, the long-period event reflects the change in flow pattern of the fluid that is being pushed through cracks…. What the long-period events are telling you then is how the magma is evolving as it comes closer and closer to the surface. The long-period event has a distinct signature marked by an emergent signal and then a slowly dying single dominant tone." (PBS, 2002).

The documentary visually demonstrated the flowing magma within a crevice, encountering a block, building up pressure, breaking through the crevice, and moving into the next space until it finally broke through to the surface.

I felt like I was that mountain with creative magma flowing through me, breaking through mental barriers until the lava flowed freely to the surface. The qualities of voice, i.e. Peter Elbow's (1994) voice with authority or resonant voice, meant different things about an author's expression; just as the various resonant sounds of the seismograph meant different things to the seismologist. But what was happening within the mountain was the living process. Heat and molten fluid systematically moved to the surface,

changing and reshaping the mountain, forging a path for resources feeding life on the surface. And each mountain was unique with its individual seismic signature. As Chouet studied the similarities and differences among the mountains, his model for predicting when a volcano would blow became more complex and precise.

I do not advocate building a model to predict the development of artistic voice. Chouet was only interested in predicting the moment the volcano would explode because it was dangerous to the people who lived around it. The path the lava pursued through the mountain was too complex and unpredictable for building a model. What is of interest to me is the living process, the creative process, an ever-changing emergent process.

The artistic voice as volcano metaphor captured the sense of commonality—the molten lava at the core of the Earth, searching for cracks and crevices to emerge through to the surface. It also captured the unique qualities of each mountain; the creative source arising through an individual interest or passion, overcoming obstacles and barriers to emerge to the surface, and restructuring the individual in the process. I found that emergent process reflected in my own story of artistic voice as well as the voices of the participants. And we shared the sense that the individual inner core was somehow connected to a common source, whatever that source might be labeled.

In the human dimension, I was the seismologist discovering the ability to listen to my inner thoughts and emotions while deciphering the meaning of resonant sounds common to artists. Developing a language for my own inner sounds involved uncovering the diverse qualities found in initial *good or bad, approach or avoidance*, reactions. As Korzybski (1933) stated, I contemplated and evaluated my reactions and responses, and

developed the capacity to interpret the significance of those behaviors, and how to create new, more complex frames of reference for interpretation. For example, early in the project, I found myself writing and rewriting the beginning of this document, describing different starting points for my own creative journey. I developed a greater self-awareness through the writing process, especially of the self-critical voice that stifled my love of the work. I listened to that self-critical voice and found connections to past experiences in my family that held painful memories. Letting go of those painful experiences allowed me to create a new, compassionate voice, one that enjoyed my learning process. But I was uncertain how much of my personal journey needed to be included in the final document. I decided that exploring my level of vulnerability needed to be balanced with the goals of the project.

Painful emotions played a role in breaking apart the old mental framework and re-cementing the new structure just as I found in Dewey's model (see Chapter 2). I wanted a deep connection to that Creative Source and this project supported my commitment to discover it.

Rather than avoiding painful experience and resulting emotions, I learned to move into them. But I first had to observe my behavior. There were many ways I found to avoid working on this dissertation. At times, without thought, my body would lift out of this chair and I would decide to clean my home or run an errand. I learned to listen to those movements. I developed the skills to calm my body's sensations, finding fear, grief, or despair through mindfulness practices such as meditation and yoga. My psychological training of listening to clients' experiences with present moment consciousness helped me to listen closely to my own experience with compassion.

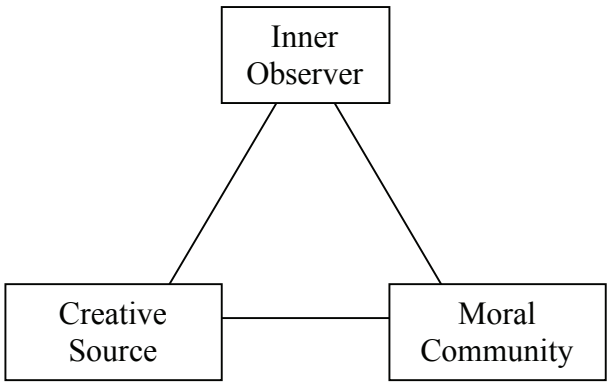
Then I noticed a shift. I began to open to the exploration of my own voice as I let go of the emotions behind the avoidance behavior. About six months ago, calmness settled in my body and I knew in my heart I would finish this project. The commitment to completion overrode any anxiety, timidity, or hesitancy about my own competence. I let go of the desire for the outcome to reflect the beauty of that moment when the idea first came to me. I let go of the demands I placed on myself to know how to do this project before I did it. I quit researching or searching for answers (too much flux as Dewey would say) and took action. I was determined to finish and willing to let the world see the level of imperfection that reflected my own developmental stage. I might not be an artist yet, but I was going to get my voice out into the world. And I invited my Creative Source to guide me to find the means to say whatever needed to be said.

Dewey (1934) was correct when he talked about the intensity and turbulence of the emotion signaling a deep desire and the role the emotions played in locating resources. My desire to experience the creative flow within me kept me focused and driven to understand and overcome limitations. I discovered there were many forms of creative flow. Early in the process, I woke up each morning with intense creative ideas and energy. Later in the project, there developed a subtler, calm knowing as ideas surfaced as needed.

Reuniting the relationships between heart, mind, body, and soul required listening to my experience and acting on opportunities to form community connections—with participants of the study, with friends willing to listen to my frustrations and victories, and with teachers guiding me to look deeper within; to not give up.

The dimensions needed for my artistic voice to develop included: my belief and trust in a Creative Source, an inner observer of my experience, and a context supportive of the developmental process (what I might call a moral community or community of care). I liked the idea of a triangle representing the volcano or mountain and the elements needed to create the structure for artistic voice.

Structural Elements of Artistic Voice



The development of a caring framework required embracing my existing fear-based framework, listening to the fear, and exploring with compassion the dynamic language of each reaction. The vulnerability that lay at the center of my being was then safe to emerge. I had an authoritative (authoring) voice to support the expression of my heart.

The Language of the Heart

Initially, I wrote that this section would be a map for artistic voice in the moment of expression. But as I wrote, that idea changed. Many, many moments of expression,

just like many crevices broken through, came together forming my path to artistic voice—an emergent process that continues with each stroke of this keyboard.

My first model placed fear and love as opposite states of mind. But over the years, I learned, like the participants of this study, that embracing fear was key to entering into a conscious creative state. Bill Wittliff imagined his fear as a black domino driving the white domino. Sandra Adair put her arm around the shoulders of her fear and walked together with it into her creative process. I saw my fear as the hard outer shell of a seed containing new life. With that image, the volcano metaphor and rain forest metaphor began to merge.

A dynamic image of lava flowing from a volcano and creating a rich foundation for plant life emerged. Fast forward across centuries of plant and animal life forming collaborative and competitive communities for growth. Conflict and communion shaped instinctual emotions of fear and care. A rich environment of resources fed the individual life forms and the transformation process—adjusting moment by moment to changing conditions. An evolving learning environment taking advantage of chance seeds blown in the wind to a new location or a harsh winter forcing animals to migrate farther south to new grasslands; harmony arising out of the stark challenge of survival. With the right conditions, the hard outer shell broke open and the seed began new life.

Art, according to Dewey (1934), was a reminder of that rhythm. Cultural fragmentation distanced the individual from that sound. Community systems—such as religion, science, art, politics, and family systems—developed structures shaping the roles of each individual. And yet, the same creative process that shaped the individual also shaped those social systems.

Reconnecting consciously to the creative, pulsing rhythm, to me was the source of power within Dewey's (1934) aesthetic consciousness. Opening the heart was the key. Listening, listening, listening to the silence until it spoke, in images or sensations or thoughts, and then creating a language of expression through craft formed the pathway to the surface. Patiently waiting, trusting the Creative Source, for the timing and resources to serendipitously merge with action. With practice, the aesthetic flow and pace of artistic action became fluid, united.

The feedback from my dissertation committee closed the loop, the circle of dialogue—from the inspired idea (my heart's desire to create) to individual understanding through engaging with form and finally community feedback pushing me out of the nest to fly. I fell in love with this process of transformation. Creating metaphors and symbolic images freed my spirit to express feelings and emotions, sappy or painful, daring or trite, soaring beyond the restrictions of an objective or subjective language. I connected with the universal substance of life in all Nature through those images and played like a child, fascinated with each new discovery. The metaphoric system became my playground and like the wind beneath the wings of the bird or butterfly, I learned to soar on its flow.

I wrote the above words in past tense as if the understanding was already known. But I just discovered the language of my own heart—metaphoric images. The final link fell into place.

I saw others passion in the language of light or color. But, I just realized my own love was connecting through the language of images. Nancy Schiesari used light to convey her experience of a young woman's plight as a prostitute. Don Howard used the

events of daily life to point to his experience of discovering deeper meaning beneath the surface. I was wondering what I would say about my own language. As I felt the freedom in my chest of soaring like a bird on the winds of metaphors, I made the final connection. As Bill Wittliff said, "How do I know what I know until I see what I say?" Wow.

What else is there to say? The nugget of gold was just waiting there for me to open my own eyes and see it was there all along. I just had to have the courage to open to my heart, step into the unknown, and write down what came to mind. I find it ironic that my search to define the metaphor, artistic voice, was like Dorothy's journey in *The Wizard of Oz*. The shoes on her feet, the understanding she needed, were with her all the time. The initial knowing, the gift of metaphor, was with me throughout this journey and the key to bringing me back home to my own heart.

Clarifying Artistic Voice

I want to answer my beginning question: What is artistic voice? It is a concept and a process. Starting with artistic voice as concept, remember that, according to Korzybski (1933), a concept is a group of properties selected to describe an observed or felt event either internal or external. My experience of artistic voice was first internal—a felt knowing experience. I then created an external project—observing the lives of other artists to identify common properties. The research then became internal as I wrote—a felt sense of clarity as I expressed my inner experience through metaphor.

My senses received information as I listened to artists describe their journey of finding their voice, auditory, visual, and kinesthetic rhythms. I interpreted the meaning

of their descriptions of writing from within their stories' characters, editing from a felt sense of what was right, or knowing that a piece of work accurately reflected their inner experience of it. The artist's tool—the editing machine, the story in a screenplay, the colors and lighting of the set—shaped how the artist experienced the work, i.e. in timing or pacing, the inner feelings of the characters, or the mood of the story.

Artistic voice from the artist's perspective becomes the concept of what takes place in the moment of engagement with form, the moment of expression. If the expressive process is artistic, I include Dewey's (1934) description: *A balanced aesthetic conscious learning state merging with in-the-moment expression. Balanced* means undergoing an internal felt experience and doing or re-creating that state in form. An *aesthetic* state is goal-directed with an awareness of rhythmic patterns such as feelings or visual images. *Conscious* involves open awareness versus awareness limited by fear or judgment (here the importance of trust allows for engagement and intimacy). *Learning state* the interactive process between individual and environment involves experimentation and evaluations of interpretations.

Artistic voice from the perspective of the audience member involves the work of creating an understanding of the work of art, going through a similar selection process as the artist but based on the person's own senses and interpretations. The person viewing a piece of work can often sense the author's presence through the love of the piece, what interested the artist, i.e. brilliant colors, rugged characters, or a human story. But also, if the artist is fully engaged with the work, the unconscious may also be revealed.

The development process of voice as the instrument of expression involves years of refining an artist's craft. Learning the tools and the language of the craft begins with

understanding existing rules and mechanics of production. Mastering the tools and language allows artists to experiment and extend the instruments expression in new and creative ways. Meaning and emotion, both cultural and personal, are explored and expanded. Unique experience could find universal connection.

In-the-moment expression is an emergent, non-linear process. Openness to surprise allows new gestalt experiences to arise, new part-to-whole dynamic relationships, new perspectives, and new ways of seeing.

And therein lies the value of studying artistic voice for psychology. In addition to teaching clients the process of finding their voices as Belenky, et al. described in their participants' perspectives on voice, breaking through isolation and fear, it is important to develop the ability to identify and explore existing mental and social paradigms. No individual paradigm is built in isolation. Language systems, inference systems, and social dynamics shape individual perspectives. Limited, unchanging perspectives restrict growth and the ability to explore potential change. Psychology has developed ways to help individuals to build self-reflexive tools to guide their own listening and to reconnect with a Creative Source.

Artistry reminds us how to connect with a knowing that is before language and systems, to trust our heart, body, and soul as well as our minds. Artists demonstrate mastery of the creative process that is emerging in the moment within each human being and the environment we live in. Reconnecting with that creative process within and between life forms reshapes our concepts and how we see, whether we trust ourselves, our relationships, our Creative Source—all that is beyond language but made more visible through language.

In addition to psychology for the individual, artistic voice is a valuable concept for groups. Artistic voice as a concept arises at all levels; from the experience of the individual, from the experience of a group, and from the experience of a nation. It is the expressed gestalt of organized parts functioning dynamically as a whole if the whole is aesthetically conscious, similar to Prigogine's Bernard cells. Awareness of the interconnected nature of all life and the creative process increases that consciousness. Levels of organization have no beginning or end but continually emerge, just as the cells organize into an organ, organs organize into a system, internal systems organize into a body, and bodies organize into social systems, etc.

I was asked in the dissertation defense meeting if this study described my artistic voice or a general concept of artistic voice. I told the committee member it was both. This research demonstrated the process of my own development, described the process of film artists' development, and described a concept and process based on these experiences. Aesthetic consciousness was the dynamic emergent experience as well as the final product. The dialogical process of this study informed the composition and clarification of the vague idea.

The limitations of this study involve the concepts of verification important to the dominant scientific paradigm. Personal experience can only be verified by demonstration of the learning not by duplication of the experiment. Replication of this study would not be possible as the serendipitous events and gestalt experiences were unique, one-time events. However, those events demonstrate the universal nature of the creative process.

Another limitation was the focus of the interview questions. The questions were written from the perspective of a beginning inquiry into artistic voice. As such, more

questions were devoted to eliciting the developmental process rather than the artist's experience of Dewey's (1934) "direct experience." Another research study could focus on discriminating the similarities and difference between the concepts of direct experience and Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) concept of 'flow.'

My desire for this study is to establish a first step in building a new vision for the study of the human experience, one that includes a person-in-environment perspective and the creative, emergent process. Future studies could include how to build a paradigm for re-integrating mind/body/environment research. The process of emergence and transformation are fertile ground for research and development of frameworks built on complexity assumptions and inclusion of the creative process.

Appendix

Interview Guide

Artistic Background

When did you begin thinking of yourself as an artist?

What is your understanding of the concept of voice in art?

Was there an experience(s) of developing artistic voice? What was that experience(s)?

What was the progression of artistic development, leading up to that point and after?

Who are the people that have been key influences on your work?

What are the sources of inspiration?

Creative Process: Medium

Where do you get your ideas for your stories?

How do you develop the threads of your stories?

As you're developing the characters or plot of the story, how do you "bring them to life?"

As you are weaving together the threads of a story, what are the obstacles that arise and how do you resolve them?

Talk about the experience of transforming an idea through the stages of film production until you see it projected on a screen.

What are the limitations on voice of working with film media?

Creative Process: Audience

Part of the creative process is anticipating the audience's reaction. Talk about how that influences your work.

What role does the audience play as you are writing/directing/editing?

Creative Process: Self

Do you ever wonder about the creative process, what is the source of ideas and inspiration? What have you concluded? Can you provide examples?

How has your work influenced choices you've made in your own life?

Life Background:

I'd like to know more about who you are, your background.

Where were you born and early memories and relationships.

Do you have any early memories from early childhood?

Are there instances of important turning points in your own life? What were the circumstances surrounding those experiences? What were the specific factors that led to a shift, a realization, or insight that resolved the conflict? How did that change your perception? What is the impact of that experience on your creative work as an artist?

What stands out for you in your life over the past few years? What kind of things have been important? What stays with you?

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During the following years she was employed in various administrative positions including accountant, systems analyst, and strategic planning analyst within the construction and oil and gas industries. In 1990, she entered graduate school at the University of Texas at Arlington and obtained a Masters of Science in Social Work degree in 1993. She worked in the field of mental health, in community mental health as well as inpatient and outpatient facilities, from 1993 until she entered the Doctoral Program in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall of 1998. In September of 2003 she began a year-long internship at the University of Texas Counseling and Mental Health Center in Austin, Texas.

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